Until he received the call to the ministry, Reverend F. Brannon Jackson openly admits his early years in Gary were spent enjoying the frivolities in life. At the age of 22, eager to set himself on the path of success, he offered his skills as a welder to Gebralta Insurance Company; later he secured other positions, first at Reliable Cab, and then at the Budd Plant. It was while at the Budd Plant that he accepted his call to the ministry. Incidentally, this call came disguised as a church hymn: while playing poker with friends, Reverend Jackson became agitated when a man began walking room to room singing these songs. He followed the man, intending to ask him to quiet down, but instead discovered the verses sung stirred a passion within his soul that has yet to be quelled. Under the direction of Reverend L.J. Harris and the New Mount Moriah Missionary Baptist Church, Reverend Jackson freed himself from the entanglements complicating his life and set his feet upon this path of righteousness.

Knowing his congregation would benefit from a minister well versed in spiritual, as well as secular affairs, Reverend Jackson began to challenge himself intellectually. He attended Chicago Baptist Institute and completed his GED, but his hunger for this intellectual development remained insatiable. Bolstered by his renewed faith in God and in himself, Reverend Jackson enrolled in Indiana Christian University, where he attained not only a bachelor’s degree, but successfully earned a master’s degree in religious arts.

Reverend Jackson’s devotion to the Baptist Church is best reflected by the distinguished positions he has held and by the awards he has garnered during his 36 years in the ministry. He served as the president of the General Missionary Baptist state convention and the Indiana state convention. He lent his religious expertise to the National Baptist Convention, where he participated as an active board member. The culmination of his many years of dedicated service to the Baptist Church was achieved in 1998, when Indiana Governor Frank O’Bannon honored him with the Sagamore of Wabash Award, the highest award the governor can bestow upon a citizen.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you and my other colleagues join me in honoring Reverend F. Brannon Jackson as he observes his 36th year in the ministry. To the benefit of Northwest Indiana, Reverend Jackson’s arrival in Gary was, in his own words, “God’s will.” In 1946, after serving in the military, he planned to visit his cousins in the city when he was to return to San Francisco. Once here, this young man from Mobile, Alabama abandoned his plans to travel west, for he felt strangely drawn to this area, in spite of its differences from his native state.

I was also unavoidably detained for Roll Call No. 67, H.R. 2509, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing Security Printing Amendments Act of 2001. Had I been present I would have voted “yea.”

Mr. Speaker, Catherine Watts-Coleman has devoted her life to serving her family and her community. As such, she is more than worthy of receiving our recognition today and I urge my colleagues to join me in honoring this truly remarkable woman.

Catherine grew up in a caring, loving and spiritual household and she continues to always put God first in her life. Her daily meditation includes the 23rd and 121st Psalms, and the 14th Chapter of St. John. With that commitment to her community, she continues to be a tithe member of her childhood church, the Church of the Living God in Statesville, North Carolina, and alternates weekly worship between Nazarene Temple and Faith Holy Churches in Brooklyn.

Today, Catherine is a happy retiree who continues to reach out and touch the lives of others by happily volunteering her time. One of her greatest joys is talking about her six grandchildren, Zuri, Maurice, Larissa, Lauren, Lance Jr., and Latrice. She is also proud of her daughter-in-laws, nieces, and nephews who are an integral part of her life.

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