

KATHY CASTOR
14TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND COMMERCE
VICE RANKING MEMBER
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND POWER
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0914

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
2052 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-3376
DISTRICT OFFICE:
4144 NORTH ARMENIA AVENUE
SUITE 300
TAMPA, FL 33607
(813) 871-2817
www.castor.house.gov

Feb. 20, 2018

RE: Update on replacement of Florida statue in U.S. Capitol

Dear Colleague:

I am pleased to report that, following bipartisan encouragement from the Florida Congressional delegation, the Florida Legislature has voted to replace Confederate General Kirby Smith with a statue of the great educator Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune to represent the State of Florida in the U.S. Capitol. This statue will serve as the first African American to represent a state in Statuary Hall in the U.S. Capitol, according to the Architect of the Capitol. I know you share my excitement that Florida will be represented by one of America's most important educators and civil rights leaders, Dr. Bethune, who also will be the first African American female to officially represent a state in National Statuary Hall in the U.S. Capitol.

Like many of you, I strongly believe that the State of Florida should be represented in the U.S. Capitol by an outstanding Floridian who represents our diverse population and the essence of our dynamic Sunshine State. Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune's life's work as an educator and civil rights leader serves as an example for all Americans of someone who fought for equal rights, high quality education, respect for our veterans, and perseverance. Mary McLeod Bethune will join Dr. John Gorrie to represent our state in the U.S. Capitol. Dr. Gorrie, who is known as the father of air conditioning and refrigeration was also a noted physician, inventor, scientist and humanitarian.

Confederate General Kirby Smith has stood in Statuary Hall since 1922 and now ownership will pass to the state of Florida. The Division of Cultural Affairs of the Department of State will be tasked with finding a more appropriate home for the statue and turn the page on this chapter in America's history.

I invite you to join me at a meeting with the Architect of the Capitol to answer questions and facilitate the smooth transition of the Dr. Bethune statue to National Statuary Hall and I will contact you shortly to set a convenient time. I know you share my gratitude for members of the Florida Legislature, especially Sens. Perry Thurston, State Reps. Patrick Henry and Tom Leek, who worked diligently over the past few years to make this a reality. Thank you as well to the members of the bipartisan Florida Congressional delegation who originally urged the Florida Legislature to change the statue to better reflect our values.

Floridians themselves voted to install Mary McLeod Bethune as a representation of our great state with the help of the State of Florida Great Floridians Committee. Many others pressed

the Legislature to act after that vote. Thank you to everyone who has renewed calls for Florida to act. I am so proud that Florida will take this most meaningful step.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me or my Outreach Director, Dewayne Mallory, at Dewayne.Mallory@mail.house.gov or 813-871-2817.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kathy Castor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kathy Castor
U.S. Representative
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