

ONE HUNDRED FIFTH LEGISLATURE

SECOND SESSION

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION 495

Introduced by McDonnell, 5.

WHEREAS, Matthew Oliver Ricketts was born of a slave family on April 3, 1858, near New Castle, in Henry County, Kentucky; and

WHEREAS, after moving to Missouri with his parents and earning a degree from the Lincoln Institute (now Lincoln University of Missouri) in Jefferson City, Matthew Ricketts moved to Omaha in 1880 and gained admission to the Omaha Medical College; and

WHEREAS, Matthew Oliver Ricketts received a medical degree in March 1884, graduating with honors and becoming the first black person to graduate from a Nebraska college or university and the first black person to become a doctor in the state; and

WHEREAS, upon graduation, Doctor Ricketts married Alice Nelson and they raised a family of three children: Richard, Alma, and Helen; and

WHEREAS, Doctor Ricketts became known for his skill as a physician and public speaker, endeavoring to improve the public welfare; and

WHEREAS, Doctor Ricketts is credited with the creation of the Negro Fire Department Company in Omaha in 1895 and was a leader of the Prince Hall Masons; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Ricketts was the first black person elected to the Nebraska House of Representatives, where he served two terms, from 1892 through 1896; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Ricketts, as a Republican, led the debate on important issues of the time; his bill to end the ban on miscegenation passed but was vetoed by the Governor, Silas A. Holcomb; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Ricketts sponsored one bill that amended the Nebraska Civil Rights Bill of 1865 to change "citizen" to "person" and another bill which,

when enacted, prohibited the denial of services in public places to anyone on account of race; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Ricketts died January 15, 1917, in St. Joseph, Missouri, where he had continued his practice of medicine and played a prominent role in the politics of the city after he moved his family there in 1903; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Ricketts dedicated his life to his family, his faith, his profession, and his community, excelling despite poverty, racism, and the other limitations of his era and thereby setting an example for Nebraskans today.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA, SECOND SESSION:

1. That the Legislature designates April 3, 2019, as Dr. Matthew Oliver Ricketts Day in Nebraska.

2. That all Nebraskans are encouraged to join together to recognize, commemorate, and celebrate the history, accomplishments, and example of Dr. Matthew Oliver Ricketts.

3. That all Nebraskans are encouraged to study civil rights and the lives of other Nebraskans who excelled and contributed to their communities despite hardships.