

## Senate Resolution 110 - Introduced

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 110

BY REICHMAN

1 A Resolution recognizing and honoring Zion Mennonite  
2 Church in Donnellson, Iowa, on its 175th  
3 anniversary.

4 WHEREAS, the first Mennonites to settle west of the  
5 Mississippi River were the John Carl Krehbiel family at  
6 West Point, Iowa, on November 1, 1839, just six years  
7 after the Iowa Territory was opened for settlement; and

8 WHEREAS, by 1845, there were enough Mennonite  
9 families in Lee County to formally organize a church  
10 service, but this early gathering faced tragedy  
11 when their first ordained minister, Reverend Johannes  
12 Mueller (Miller), was murdered during a robbery the day  
13 before that service on May 11, 1845; and

14 WHEREAS, on May 5, 1850, the congregation dedicated  
15 the completion of the first Mennonite church west of  
16 the Mississippi built out of logs and located about one  
17 and one-half miles east of Franklin, Iowa, known as the  
18 "Busch" Mennonite Church; and

19 WHEREAS, a group of five families from the  
20 Palatinate in Germany, settled west of West Point in  
21 the Franklin Township area of Lee County, known as the  
22 "Franklin Prairie", and organized another congregation  
23 to be known as the Zion congregation; and

24 WHEREAS, these families held the first service in  
25 late autumn of 1851 in a little frame school house,  
26 District No. 4, in Franklin Township, led by Reverend  
27 Henry Ellenberger; and

28 WHEREAS, the Zion congregation understood that a

1 church community without a school could not exist, so  
2 they established the first Mennonite school west of the  
3 Mississippi River on August 2, 1853, led by Christian  
4 Schowalter who taught for 36 years, maintaining the  
5 teaching of the Bible and German grammar until it  
6 ceased operation in 1918, during World War I, due  
7 to national sentiments against those openly speaking  
8 German; and

9 WHEREAS, the Zion congregation adopted its first  
10 constitution on November 5, 1853, under the official  
11 name German Evangelical Mennonite Congregation in  
12 Franklin Township, Lee County, Iowa; and

13 WHEREAS, on October 21, 1855, the Zion congregation  
14 dedicated its first building built of limestone located  
15 on the present Zion cemetery, two miles north and one  
16 mile west of Donnellson; and

17 WHEREAS, at this first stone church, on March  
18 21, 1859, the Zion and West Point churches held a  
19 meeting that is considered to be the beginning of  
20 the unification of the Mennonite congregations and  
21 that led to the founding of the General Conference  
22 Mennonite Church on May 28 and 29, 1860, which then  
23 met in Nashville, Tennessee, in July 2001 to unite the  
24 General Conference with the Mennonite Church to form  
25 the Mennonite Church, USA; and

26 WHEREAS, on February 2, 1909, the Zion Mennonite  
27 Church in Donnellson, Iowa, was dedicated and has  
28 faithfully served its congregation for 117 years; and

29 WHEREAS, Zion Mennonite became yoked with the  
30 Donnellson Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., on August

1 23, 1970, where both maintained their denomination  
2 identity and polity while sharing ministries and  
3 working together as Christians to spread the joy and  
4 message of the Gospel of Christ for 40 years until  
5 the closure of the Donnellson Presbyterian Church on  
6 January 31, 2010; and

7 WHEREAS, the congregation today is led by Rachelle  
8 Luitjens of Olds, Iowa, the 37th pastor overseeing  
9 Sunday services and the works of the church; and

10 WHEREAS, the mission of Zion Mennonite Church is,  
11 "Trusting in God's hope for our future, we meet God  
12 in rich and meaningful worship, nurture each generation  
13 to grow in faith, and serve the needs of others in  
14 love, here and around the world; as a beacon of God's  
15 love, we invite all people to join our family as we  
16 joyfully live together with Jesus in the power of the  
17 Holy Spirit"; NOW THEREFORE,

18 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE, That the Senate  
19 congratulates and honors Zion Mennonite Church's  
20 historical presence in Iowa and for 175 years of  
21 Anabaptism and Mennonite fellowship in Lee County, the  
22 state of Iowa, and across the globe; and

23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Senate recognizes  
24 that global Mennonites celebrated 500 years of  
25 Anabaptism in 2025, honoring its founding by Menno  
26 Simons in Zurich, Switzerland, in 1525.