

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 when
11 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 to
7 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 23,

1 1970, where both maintained their denomination identity
2 and polity while sharing ministries and working
3 together as Christians to spread the joy and message
4 of the Gospel of Christ for 40 years until the closure
5 of the Donnellson Presbyterian Church on January 31,
6 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 in
12 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.