

1 SENATE BILL NO. 96

2 INTRODUCED BY S. WEBBER

3

4 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE HELEN CLARKE MEMORIAL HIGHWAY IN
5 GLACIER COUNTY; DIRECTING THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO INSTALL SIGNS AT THE
6 LOCATION AND TO INCLUDE THE MEMORIAL HIGHWAY ON THE NEXT PUBLICATION OF THE STATE
7 HIGHWAY MAP; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE."

8

9 WHEREAS, Helen Piotopowaka Clarke was born in 1846 to a Scottish American father and a Blackfoot
10 mother, Cothcocoma; and

11 WHEREAS, she spent most of her childhood at a convent school in Cincinnati and returned to Montana
12 just a few years before a group of Blackfoot men murdered her father in 1869; and

13 WHEREAS, on January 23, 1870, Clarke's brothers participated in the Bear River Massacre (Baker
14 Massacre), during which the U.S. Army slaughtered 217 women, children, and the elderly suffering from
15 smallpox of the peaceful camp of Chief Heavy Runner; and

16 WHEREAS, following the massacre, Helen Clarke moved to the east coast and had a brief but
17 successful acting career in New York; and

18 WHEREAS, in 1875, she returned to Montana and found a teaching position in Helena, but
19 experienced discrimination and racism because of her mixed race ancestry; and

20 WHEREAS, in 1882, Clarke was elected as Lewis and Clark County Superintendent of Schools, one of
21 the first two women and the only person of Indian descent to hold elective office in Montana Territory. She held
22 the position for three terms; and

23 WHEREAS, in 1889, Clarke left Montana to work for the Department of Interior, Indian Bureau, as an
24 allotment agent. Again, she was met with discrimination—this time for her sex. Officials within the department
25 felt a woman had no business or legal right to work as an Indian agent; and

26 WHEREAS, in 1901, Clarke moved to San Francisco, where she established herself as a tutor of
27 "artes, elocution and dramatic art." However, anti-Indian prejudices followed her to California; and

28 WHEREAS, in 1911, Clarke wrote about the pervasiveness of anti-Indian racism: "This very nation

1 looks with eyes askance upon the cultured, the intelligent, intellectual half-breeds of mixed-bloods who reside
2 either off or on reservations. Such inconsistencies in character or principles belong not to a great people"; and

3 WHEREAS, by the end of her remarkable life, Clarke had proved through experience a bitter truth: no
4 matter how accomplished a woman was, no matter how assimilated a person of indigenous ancestry, America
5 was unwilling to let go of its prejudices against both women and Indians; and

6 WHEREAS, Helen Piotopowaka Clarke died on March 4, 1923, in the village of East Glacier, Montana,
7 and was laid to rest in the East Glacier Cemetery; and

8 WHEREAS, the 67th Legislature of the State of Montana honors Helen Clarke for her work in improving
9 the quality of life and equality of opportunity in her time.

10

11 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

12

13 NEW SECTION. Section 1. Helen Clarke memorial highway. (1) There is established the Helen
14 Clarke memorial highway on the existing U.S. highway 2 from the limits of East Glacier to the limits of
15 Browning.

16 (2) The department shall design and install appropriate signs marking the location of the Helen Clarke
17 memorial highway.

18 (3) Maps that identify roadways in Montana must be updated to include the location of the Helen
19 Clarke memorial highway when the department updates and publishes the state maps.

20

21 NEW SECTION. Section 2. Codification instruction. [Section 1] is intended to be codified as an
22 integral part of Title 60, chapter 1, part 2, and the provisions of Title 60, chapter 1, part 2, apply to [section 1].

23

24 NEW SECTION. Section 3. Effective date. [This act] is effective on passage and approval.

25

- END -