

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 50

On the death of Noel Calvin Taylor.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, January 21, 2000
 Agreed to by the Senate, January 27, 2000

WHEREAS, Noel Calvin Taylor, Roanoke's longest-serving mayor and the city's most popular, effective, and productive political leader of the past half-century, died on October 29, 1999; and

WHEREAS, a native of Bedford County, Noel Taylor earned his high school diploma in Bluefield, served in the United States Army during World War II, then worked his way through Bluefield State College and graduated in 1949; and

WHEREAS, following several years of teaching in Bedford County, Noel Taylor entered the ministry, earning a master's degree in religious education from New York University and pastoring churches in Clifton Forge and Norfolk before arriving in Roanoke in 1961; and

WHEREAS, Roanoke in 1961 was still a largely segregated city, yet a mere nine years later, Noel Taylor won election to the City Council and became its first African-American member; and

WHEREAS, in 1975 Noel Taylor became mayor on the death of incumbent Roy Webber, won election to the post in 1976, served as mayor for an unprecedented 17 years, and became one of the most popular politicians in Roanoke's history; and

WHEREAS, Noel Taylor never lost an election for mayor, and his popularity and effectiveness are evident in the fact that the Democratic Party never nominated a candidate to oppose him as mayor and he was challenged only once by an independent, whom he defeated easily; and

WHEREAS, renowned for his graciousness, his impressive skills as an orator, and his ability to work quietly for the betterment of the city, Noel Taylor was widely respected by political allies and adversaries alike; and

WHEREAS, during Noel Taylor's long tenure as mayor, the City of Roanoke prospered, with substantial revitalization of the downtown area and widespread economic prosperity perhaps his most lasting legacies; and

WHEREAS, under Noel Taylor's leadership, Roanoke was recognized as an All-America City three times, in 1979, 1982, and 1987; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his political duties, Noel Taylor served for 37 years as pastor of High Street Baptist Church, where using his oratorical skills he was a leader, during the 1960s, in the successful efforts to integrate city buses, lunch counters, schools, and other public facilities; and

WHEREAS, over a long and extraordinarily successful career, Noel Taylor repeatedly demonstrated his superb political skills, his visionary leadership, and his undying affection for the people of Roanoke; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly mourn the passing of a giant figure in the history of the City of Roanoke, Noel Calvin Taylor; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Noel Calvin Taylor as an expression of the deep and abiding respect in which his memory is held by the members of the General Assembly.

ENROLLED

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