

2002 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 469

Celebrating the life of Jessie M. Rattley.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 6, 2002
Agreed to by the Senate, March 8, 2002

WHEREAS, Jessie M. Rattley, for 20 years a pioneering political leader in the City of Newport News, died on March 2, 2001; and

WHEREAS, a native of Birmingham, Alabama, Jessie Rattley graduated from Fairfield High School in 1947, then entered Hampton Institute, from which she graduated with honors in 1951; and

WHEREAS, Jessie Rattley began her teaching career at Huntington High School, then in 1952 founded the Peninsula Business College, which provided an opportunity for young people and adults to be trained for success in the business world; and

WHEREAS, in seeking employment opportunities for her students, Jessie Rattley began her lifelong commitment to civil rights, political involvement, and public service; and

WHEREAS, in 1970 Jessie Rattley became the first African American and the first woman to be elected to the Newport News City Council, and she followed up that stunning victory by winning the highest vote totals in her reelection campaigns in 1974, 1978, 1982, and 1986; and

WHEREAS, in 1976 Jessie Rattley was elected vice-mayor of Newport News and in 1986, at the time of her reelection to her fifth term in office, she was elected mayor, the first African American and the first woman to hold that position; and

WHEREAS, continuing her trailblazing at the state and national levels, Jessie Rattley became the first African American elected president of the Virginia Municipal League and was the first African American and the first woman elected president of the National League of Cities, which represents more than 15,000 municipalities across the country; and

WHEREAS, during her distinguished career in public service, Jessie Rattley served on innumerable committees, commissions, task forces, and delegations at the state, national, and international levels; and

WHEREAS, for her outstanding service to Newport News, the Commonwealth, and the nation, Jessie Rattley was honored by the National League of Cities, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, Old Dominion University, Hampton University, the NAACP, and the National Conference of Christians and Jews; and

WHEREAS, in 1990 Jessie Rattley returned to her career as an educator, first as a fellow at the Institute of Politics, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, and then at her alma mater, Hampton University, where she was serving as a senior lecturer in the political science department at the time of her death; and

WHEREAS, over the course of a truly extraordinary career of public service, Jessie Rattley served a number of constituencies with honor, dignity, effectiveness, and devotion; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly note with sadness the loss of a pioneering Newport News political leader, Jessie M. Rattley; 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 Jessie M. Rattley as an expression of the General Assembly's deep and abiding respect for her lifetime of service to the citizens of Virginia.

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