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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 159

Offered January 14, 2004

Prefiled January 14, 2004

Designating June 20, in 2004 and in each succeeding year, as Delegate Roland J. Ealey Day in Virginia.

Patrons—Baskerville and Watts

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the late Roland J. Ealey, former member of the Virginia House of Delegates, born on June 20, 1914, in Kershaw, South Carolina, moved to Richmond with his family in 1915, and although educated in the public schools of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, he graduated from Armstrong High School in Richmond, where he was president of the Class of 1932; and

WHEREAS, in 1936, he received the bachelor of arts degree from Virginia Union University in Richmond, and to fulfill his childhood ambition to become a lawyer, Delegate Ealey earned his law degree from Howard University School of Law in 1939; and

WHEREAS, upon his admission to the Virginia State Bar in 1940, he established the law firm of Ealey and Page in Richmond; and

WHEREAS, prior to his service as First Sergeant in the United States Army during World War II in the Mid-Pacific Theatre of Operations from 1943 to 1946, he taught law at the Lincoln University School of Law in St. Louis, Missouri; and

WHEREAS, after the war, he resumed the practice of law in Richmond and became one of the pioneers of the Civil Rights Movement, often providing legal services pro bono; and

WHEREAS, after the death of Delegate James S. Christian, Jr., supported by three of Richmond's top elected officials, the Richmond Crusade for Voters, and the citizens of Richmond's East End, Delegate Ealey was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates in 1983 from the 70th House District, and was returned by the voters for five consecutive two-year terms; and

WHEREAS, as a member of the House Committees on Claims, Militia and Police, Labor and Commerce, and Corporations, Insurance and Banking, a position in which he served with distinction, fellow legislators and lobbyists noted the zeal and tenacity with which he represented the interests of his constituents, and that he pursued his legislative responsibilities with the same vigor, passion, and success that he devoted to the practice of law; and

WHEREAS, during his tenure as a member of the General Assembly, Delegate Ealey patroned legislation designed to improve the quality of life in Virginia, secure justice for all persons, protect civil rights, curb violent crime, and ensure excellence in public education; and

WHEREAS, he is remembered for his perseverance on gun control legislation, labor on school dropout prevention, and tireless efforts to educate policy makers, educators, and the public concerning the relationship and benefits of positive self-esteem to academic achievement, sound decision making, and successful and productive living; and

WHEREAS, although his tireless work to promote an understanding of the benefits of positive self-esteem was initially received by some policy makers and educators with skepticism, he remained steadfast in his belief and commitment that positive self-esteem is not merely a false sense of self-importance, but that it is fundamental to character development, growth, maturity, self-control, social and personal responsibility, and respect for the life and dignity of humankind; and

WHEREAS, as a dedicated champion of civil rights throughout his professional career, Delegate Ealey is credited for successfully arguing the landmark case, Johnson v. Virginia, 373 U.S. 61 (1963), before the United States Supreme Court, which struck down segregated courtrooms throughout the nation; and

WHEREAS, his distinguished legal and political career was accentuated by his devotion to public service as Commissioner in Chancery of the Richmond City Circuit Court, substitute judge of the Richmond Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court, and as a leader of the City of Richmond Strategy Team, Richmond Economic Development Program Commission, and the Church Hill Area Revitalization Team; and

WHEREAS, as an effective community activist and leader, Delegate Ealey served many professional and community organizations, notably as a founder and president of the Old Dominion Bar Association and the Richmond Chapter of the Old Dominion Bar Association; and as a member of the Virginia Chapter and the Richmond Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, Richmond Kiwanis Club, Family Law

INTRODUCED

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59 Section of the American Bar Association, Family Law Section of the Virginia State Bar, National Bar  
60 Association, American Bar Association, Virginia Trial Lawyers Association, Judicial Committee,  
61 M.W.P.H. Grand Lodge of Virginia, Free and Accepted Masons, Inc., Richmond Graduate Chapter,  
62 Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.; founder and president of the East End Civic League; past Board  
63 member, president and General Counsel of Flynn Christian Fellowship Houses of Richmond, Inc.,  
64 Premco Homes, Inc., and United Business Company, Inc.; and

65 WHEREAS, without peer in his commitment to public education, Delegate Ealey, an avid supporter  
66 of Richmond City Public Schools, generously contributed his time and resources as a school volunteer,  
67 and on many school days, he could be found reading to students in class, encouraging teachers and  
68 administrators, and working with parents and constituents concerned about academic excellence,  
69 particularly for minority students; and

70 WHEREAS, in recognition and appreciation of his many hours of outstanding community service, he  
71 received numerous awards for outstanding service and legal counsel; and

72 WHEREAS, Delegate Ealey was known and admired for his deep and abiding faith in God, which he  
73 demonstrated through faithful service to the people of God and active membership at the First African  
74 Baptist Church in Richmond for 46 years, where he served as Trustee and Adult Church School  
75 Teacher; and

76 WHEREAS, his faith was also manifested in his service to the Commonwealth as a member of the  
77 House of Delegates, where he was esteemed as a gentleman and conciliator, for his quiet dignity,  
78 eloquence, and statesmanship, and as a proponent of peaceful relations with and decency among all  
79 peoples; and

80 WHEREAS, a decade after his death on March 23, 1992, Delegate Roland J. "Duke" Ealey's  
81 constituents of the 70th House District, that he once served as an area lawyer, legislator, and civil rights  
82 leader, have initiated an effort to honor his leadership and service to the Richmond community and the  
83 Commonwealth with a fitting prominent memorial in the district; and

84 WHEREAS, Delegate Roland J. "Duke" Ealey has left an indelible mark on the soul of the  
85 Commonwealth, and the time is right to recognize this titan for his quiet but effective legal acumen,  
86 humility, advocacy, integrity, strong faith, generosity, perseverance, and devotion to the rights of his  
87 fellowman; and

88 WHEREAS, recognition of his remarkable life and achievements by members of the General  
89 Assembly through community service, by his peers in the legal profession with pro bono legal services,  
90 and by his church and other organizations with which he was affiliated by teaching the principles that he  
91 exemplified to children and youth on June 20, 2004, and each year thereafter, would serve as a  
92 testament to his legacy, a perpetual remembrance that "true" humility is power under control, and an  
93 inspiration to us all; now, therefore, be it

94 RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly designate  
95 June 20, in 2004 and in each succeeding year, as Delegate Roland J. Ealey Day in Virginia; and, be it

96 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the organizations that Delegate Roland J. Ealey loved and served  
97 honor and remember his sacrifices and contributions to this Commonwealth on June 20, in 2004 and  
98 each year thereafter, with appropriate observances which reflect his principles, work, and spirit; and, be  
99 it

100 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit a copy of this resolution  
101 to the family of the late Delegate Roland J. Ealey, and to the Presidents of the Old Dominion Bar  
102 Association, the Virginia Bar Association, the Richmond Chapter of the National Association for the  
103 Advancement of Colored People, the East End Civic League, the Pastor of the First African Baptist  
104 Church, Richmond, Virginia, and the Chairman and Superintendent of the Richmond City Public Schools  
105 so that members of his family, church, and the organizations to which he devoted his considerable gifts,  
106 talents, and resources may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter;  
107 and, be it

108 RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates post the designation of this day  
109 on the General Assembly's website.