

2006 SESSION

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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 344

Offered February 17, 2006

Commending Lieutenant Steven V. Traylor, Firefighter Michael C. Harrell, and Firefighter William J. Jeffords.

Patrons—Nixon, Cox, Dance, Hall, Ingram, Jones, D.C., Waddell and Ware, R.L.; Senators: Marsh, Martin and Watkins

WHEREAS, on August 30, 2004, the remnants of Tropical Storm Gaston moved through the Richmond metropolitan area, dumping more than a foot of rain in many areas and causing loss of life and significant flood damage to Richmond and surrounding jurisdictions; and

WHEREAS, in Chesterfield County, shortly before 8:00 in the evening, a 9-1-1 call was received by Chesterfield Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) concerning people trapped by rapidly rising floodwaters in an apartment building; and

WHEREAS, by the time Chesterfield Fire and EMS arrived on the scene, in an area of the County prone to flooding during heavy rains, floodwaters were rising through the first floor of the building, which was also showing signs of structural failure; and

WHEREAS, at least 20 individuals were trapped in different areas of the building; the floodwaters made a close approach to the building by rescue vehicles impossible; in addition the trapped individuals were in separate parts of the building, with access blocked by masonry firewalls; and

WHEREAS, this series of problems, made more urgent by the very real risk of the building collapsing, confronted Lieutenant Steven V. Traylor, Firefighter Michael C. Harrell, and Firefighter William J. Jeffords of Chesterfield Fire and EMS when they arrived with their unit; and

WHEREAS, the three men, who had to position a 14-foot straight ground ladder on the end of the fire truck's 85-foot ladder to reach the first victims, were successful in rescuing three adults and three children; and

WHEREAS, once the first six residents were safe, Firefighters Harrell and Jeffords entered the building to find the remaining occupants, broke through a cinder-block firewall using only hand tools, and rescued three more children and two adults; and

WHEREAS, with the building beginning to collapse, Firefighters Harrell and Jeffords breached another masonry wall to reach and rescue another adult; and

WHEREAS, Lieutenant Traylor, Firefighter Harrell, and Firefighter Jeffords then assisted in the rescue of still more residents in another part of the apartment complex, thereby saving the lives of more than 20 people; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of their selfless heroism, Lieutenant Steven V. Traylor, Firefighter Michael C. Harrell, and Firefighter William J. Jeffords received the Benjamin Franklin Fire Service Award for Valor, the nation's fire services' highest award for bravery, at the International Association of Fire Chiefs Conference; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Lieutenant Steven V. Traylor, Firefighter Michael C. Harrell, and Firefighter William J. Jeffords for their courage and devotion to duty; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare copies of this resolution for presentation to Lieutenant Steven V. Traylor, Firefighter Michael C. Harrell, and Firefighter William J. Jeffords as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration and gratitude for their actions.

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