

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 264

Celebrating the life of Coretta Scott King.

Agreed to by the Senate, March 9, 2006
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 10, 2006

WHEREAS, Coretta Scott King, born on April 27, 1927, in Heiberger, Alabama, was called to glory on January 30, 2006; and

WHEREAS, Coretta Scott King, third of four children born to parents who bequeathed to her a "rich legacy of faith, family, character, music, leadership, and entrepreneurship," graduated from Lincoln High School in Marion, Alabama; and

WHEREAS, despite their limited education, Coretta Scott King's parents valued education and instilled in her a thirst and appreciation for learning and encouraged her to develop and exercise her great musical gifts; and

WHEREAS, an accomplished musician, Coretta Scott King played the trumpet and piano, and appeared as a soloist in recitals and musical productions; enormously gifted, she graduated from Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, with a bachelor's degree in music and education, and studied concert singing and earned a degree in voice and violin from the New England Conservatory of Music; and

WHEREAS, while a student at the New England Conservatory of Music, she met Martin Luther King, Jr., a preacher and doctoral candidate at Boston University, whom she later married, and from this union four children were born; and

WHEREAS, as a young woman, Coretta Scott King sensed a divine call upon her life for ministry and perceived that her dream of becoming a classical concert singer would be the fulfillment of that calling; however, her marriage to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "the Drum Major for Justice," and the mantle thrust upon him by history destined her to be a champion of hope, dignity, freedom, peace, and social justice; and

WHEREAS, Coretta Scott King was an extraordinary "help meet," and balanced her roles as wife, mother, "First Lady" to her husband's pastoral offices, churchwoman, soloist, orator, exhorter, and social and political activist during the civil rights struggle and after the assassination of her husband persevered with remarkable faith, vision, diligence, gentility, compassion, forgiveness, wisdom, and strength; and

WHEREAS, working alongside her husband during the struggle for civil rights, she conceived and performed a series of Freedom Concerts, which combined prose and poetry narration with musical selections to raise funds for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization established by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., which is committed to nonviolent action to achieve social, economic, and political justice; and

WHEREAS, after the assassination of Dr. King on April 4, 1968, Coretta Scott King, "keeper of the dream," devoted her life to ensuring her husband's legacy and the perpetuation of his work through the establishment of a national holiday to honor him and the creation of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Center for Nonviolent Social Change, in Atlanta, Georgia; and

WHEREAS, during her distinguished career, Coretta Scott King traveled throughout the world, sharing the message of nonviolence and the dream of the Beloved Community; led goodwill missions to Africa, Latin America, Europe, and Asia; addressed many of history's most massive peace and justice rallies; served as a Women's Strike for Peace delegate to the 17-nation Disarmament Conference in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1962; was the first woman to deliver the class day address at Harvard University; and was the first woman to preach at a statutory service at Saint Paul's Cathedral in London; and

WHEREAS, Coretta Scott King supported democracy movements worldwide; acted as a consultant to many world leaders; conferred with great spiritual leaders; served as head of the United States delegation of Women for a Meaningful Summit in Athens, Greece, in preparation for the Reagan-Gorbachev talks in 1988; was the co-convenor of the Soviet-American Women's Summit in Washington, D.C.; witnessed the historic handshake between Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Chairman Yassir Arafat at the signing of the Middle East Peace Accords; and stood with Nelson Mandela in Johannesburg upon his election as South Africa's first democratically elected president; and

WHEREAS, Coretta Scott King was honored by national and international institutions of higher education with numerous honorary doctoral degrees; she authored three books and a nationally-syndicated column and supported many professional and civic organizations; and

WHEREAS, Coretta Scott King's life was devoted to service, social change, and the furtherance of human dignity; and

WHEREAS, beginning in 2000 with the designation of a separate state holiday for Dr. King, a

relationship was formed between Coretta Scott King and Virginia, and, in 2001, during her visit to the Commonwealth, she planted a tree on the grounds of Capitol Square to memorialize Dr. King, and unveiled the Partnering for Peace Initiative, a joint project between the Commonwealth and The King Center for Non-Violence in Atlanta, which blends Dr. King's Six Principles of Non-Violence with a matrix of preferred behaviors to demonstrate the enduring effects of positive decisions to at-risk youth; and

WHEREAS, Coretta Scott King led an exemplary life worthy of emulation and strived to improve the world for all mankind, and her legacy, "to love mercy and do justice," inspires and challenges the Commonwealth, the nation, and the world to fulfill her credo, Horace Mann's admonition: "Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity"; and

WHEREAS, her passion for the cause of civil rights, human dignity, and the fulfillment of "the Dream" earned her the title, "First Lady of Civil Rights"; and

WHEREAS, the chronicle of Coretta Scott King's life, great personal sacrifice, achievements, gift and love of music, and many contributions to mankind will be passed from generation to generation; her loving memory will be forever cherished by her children, family, and friends and all who loved and admired her; and

WHEREAS, Coretta Scott King has "fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith," and has found victory over death, eternal peace, and freedom; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of Coretta Scott King, the "First Lady of Civil Rights" and the widow of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Coretta Scott King as an expression of the veneration and respect in which her life, contributions, and memory are held by the members of the General Assembly.