

2006 SESSION

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SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 33

Offered March 10, 2006

Celebrating the life of Paul Sawyer.

Patron—McDougle

WHEREAS, Paul Sawyer, the owner of Richmond International Raceway (RIR) and a pioneer in the development of the popular sport of NASCAR, died on February 26, 2005; and

WHEREAS, Paul Sawyer was born on June 26, 1916, in Norfolk, served his country in World War II, and worked at the Naval Air Station in Norfolk from 1939 until his retirement in 1965; and

WHEREAS, Paul Sawyer's second career as a NASCAR owner started when he and his partner Joe Weatherly bought racetracks in Richmond, Virginia Beach, and Wilson, North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, Paul Sawyer bought out his partner in 1956 and turned his attention to the track in Richmond when the Wilson track burned down in 1958 and the Virginia Beach track could not be expanded; and

WHEREAS, over time, Paul Sawyer transformed the small dirt short track in Richmond into a three-quarter-mile oval track with seating for over 100,000 race fans; and

WHEREAS, Paul Sawyer, in a savvy move, decreased the number of races per week, which at the time ran 100 laps a race, and began hosting an exciting and longer 250-lap event at RIR; and

WHEREAS, for nearly 45 years as the owner of RIR, Paul Sawyer was dedicated to providing stock car racers, their crews, and their enthusiastic followers with a facility and a track that would best suit their needs, ultimately creating the unique oval track with a surface that is one of the most popular among Nextel Cup racers today; and

WHEREAS, in 1997, Paul Sawyer received the Pocono Raceway Bill France Award of Excellence and the Buddy Shuman Award, which has been presented since 1957 to an individual who has been vital to the growth and promotion of NASCAR; and

WHEREAS, in 1998, Paul Sawyer was honored with the NASCAR Founder's Award as part of NASCAR's 50th anniversary celebration; and

WHEREAS, in 1999, under great pressure to increase purses, to keep pace with NASCAR's growing popularity, and to guarantee two Nextel Cup races per year, Paul Sawyer decided to sell the facility to International Speedway Corporation; and

WHEREAS, Paul Sawyer continued to serve as chairman of the board under International Speedway Corporation ownership; and

WHEREAS, Paul Sawyer was a visionary leader, who contributed greatly to NASCAR's history and the development and popularity of the sport of stock car racing; and

WHEREAS, Paul Sawyer will be sorely missed by his family, his numerous friends and admirers, and countless race participants and fans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate of Virginia mourn the passing of a NASCAR pioneer and an outstanding Virginian, Paul Sawyer; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Paul Sawyer as an expression of the members' great respect for his memory.

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