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## SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 331

Offered January 10, 2007

Prefiled January 3, 2007

*Celebrating the life of Richard William Foster.*

Patron—Marsh

WHEREAS, Richard William Foster, native son, passed into eternal life on July 21, 2006; and  
 WHEREAS, Richard William Foster, born and reared in the Jackson Ward area of the City of Richmond, attended public schools and graduated from Armstrong High School in 1932; and

WHEREAS, after graduating from high school, he earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Virginia Union University in 1936, and barred from graduate school in Virginia due to rigid segregation policies, Richard William Foster earned a master's degree in mathematics at the University of Michigan in 1937, having been one of the first students to use a tuition grant for graduate education established by the Commonwealth to educate African Americans outside of the state; and

WHEREAS, Richard William Foster began his professional career as a teacher in the Richmond City Public Schools at Armstrong High School and at Maggie Walker High School, while working as a part-time accountant for Virginia Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Company; and

WHEREAS, in 1945, he joined the Virginia Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Company full time as the home office supervisor, overseeing the development of the company's headquarters, and in 1974, he was named president-treasurer of the company; and

WHEREAS, one of six brothers who made an indelible mark on the city and considerable contributions to the Richmond community, Richard William Foster was a soft-spoken, well-rounded, community-oriented person, a zealous advocate for education, and a believer in a strong work ethic, community volunteerism, and family; and

WHEREAS, Richard William Foster exuded a passion for community affairs and became a part of the strategy team that helped to elect Oliver W. Hill as the first African American of the Richmond City Council in modern times; he worked vigorously for voting rights, and provided bonds for people who were arrested during the sit-ins and protests against racially segregated Richmond department stores; and

WHEREAS, in 1964, he became the first African American to serve on the Richmond City Personnel Board, and in the early 1970s, he was named to the board of Richmond-based Southern Bank, now a part of Wachovia, becoming the first African American to serve as a director of a white-owned bank in Richmond; and

WHEREAS, with personal resolve, integrity, faith, and perseverance, which were so imbedded in the very character of Richard William Foster, he was able to see legally sanctioned racial segregation as only a mere impediment to his goals and dreams; he prevailed against the segregated social order to help build bridges across racial lines through his service with various community organizations, including the Boy Scouts, Astoria Beneficial Club, Inc., Richmond Crusade for Voters, YMCA, Urban League of Greater Richmond, Inc., and the United Givers Fund, now the United Way; and

WHEREAS, Richard William Foster was a man of faith, devoting himself to serving God as a lifetime member of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Richmond, and as a trustee and chairman of the finance committee of the church; and

WHEREAS, Richard William Foster was frequently cited for his service with the Astoria Beneficial Club, Inc., which his father co-founded with other community-minded men to promote voting and community service, and among his other commendations are the 1977 Brotherhood Award for community service from the National Conference for Community and Justice; an award in 1995 for 50 years of service as an Astorian; and Scouting's highest adult honor presented by a local council, the Silver Beaver Award, for his work as scoutmaster of Ebenezer Baptist Church's Troop 78 and long service on the board of the Central Virginia Council of the Boy Scouts of America; and

WHEREAS, he was a golden heritage member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), served as treasurer of the Black History Museum and Cultural Center, and as a member of the boards of the Central Virginia Educational Television Corporation, Maymont Foundation, and the Urban League of Greater Richmond; and

WHEREAS, Richard William Foster, an avid bridge player and sports fan, enjoyed mentoring young people who were novices in the world of business, and worked to improve conditions in Richmond; and

WHEREAS, Richard William Foster has left a rich legacy of commitment to education, love of Richmond, and a passion for civic involvement, and his many noteworthy achievements and contributions will be cherished by all who loved and knew him; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby

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59 note with great sadness the loss of Richard William Foster, family man, businessman, educator,  
60 churchman, mentor, civic leader, and civil rights pioneer; and, be it  
61 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for  
62 presentation to the family of Richard William Foster as an expression of the esteem in which his  
63 lifetime of commitment and service to his city and community is held by the members of the General  
64 Assembly.