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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 533

Offered February 19, 2007

Commending Walter R. T. Witschey.

Patrons—Lambert, Deeds, Herring, Locke, Lucas, Marsh, Martin, Miller, Puckett, Puller, Reynolds, Stosch, Ticer, Watkins and Whipple

WHEREAS, Dr. Walter R. T. Witschey, exemplary director of the Science Museum of Virginia for 15 years, will retire on June 30, 2007; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Witschey has been an outstanding administrator, but his greatest strength lies in his personal commitment to serve the citizens of Virginia, especially its young people, through the extraordinary development of the museum's goals to provide excellence in science and technology education through hands-on exhibits and creativity; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Witschey's many contributions to the mission and development of the Science Museum, which has evolved into an impressive campus between Broad and Leigh streets, have had an enormous impact on the advancement of science and technology education in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, during his tenure, Dr. Witschey has been instrumental in the expansion of the Science Museum facilities and its educational programs, which have received national and international recognition for educational excellence; and

WHEREAS, the Science Museum is accredited by the American Association of Museums and is a distinguished governing member of the Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC), and Dr. Witschey is an avid supporter and contributor to both prominent organizations; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Witschey's enthusiastic support for education and collaboration has resulted in the establishment of the Danville Science Center; the addition of the Rice River Center, which includes Richmond's historic Five Mile Locks; the Children's Museum of Richmond moving to its new location adjacent to the Science Museum; and the planning of the Belmont Bay Science Center, which is now under way in Northern Virginia; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Witschey has been a leading proponent of the creation of two new science centers in Bristol and Harrisonburg with the ultimate goal of fulfilling the museum's mission, as stated in the Code of Virginia, of having interactive science and technology education centers easily accessible to all young people and their families throughout the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Witschey has directed expansion of statewide outreach programs, including sciencemobile trailers, satellite and cable video in schools, Internet and other network services, science after school programs for at-risk urban middle schoolers, and the *Wonderplace* program for pre-schoolers; and

WHEREAS, when Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs) were implemented, Dr. Witschey developed museum exhibits, programs, and outreach activities to aid in SOL preparation and testing, helping students to build science skills and improve science SOL tests scores; and the museum has taken the lead in the project *Changing Lives: The Real Science Center Story*, an educational CD program that illustrates the profound impact of science on peoples' lives; and

WHEREAS, during his tenure, the Science Museum, which is now listed on the National Register of Historic Sites, has enjoyed increased state and private financial support, allowing the completion of a \$20 million renovation project of the old Broad Street Station building; and

WHEREAS, an articulate advocate for expanding museum projects to include the diverse interests of all the citizens of the Commonwealth, Dr. Witschey has served as the outstanding director of the Virginia Academy of Science, as well as ASTC; in 2005, he brought the ASTC international conference to Richmond, focusing worldwide attention on the Science Museum and Virginia's efforts to increase the public's awareness for the need for science and technology education; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Witschey's collaboration with the curators of the Virginia Aviation Museum, a Science Museum division, led to exciting exhibits of a record-holding SR-71 Blackbird, an original 1903 Wright Flyer and Wright kite replicas, and other displays that portray the entire history of aviation technology; and

WHEREAS, one of Dr. Witschey's most admirable gifts is his ability to inspire in others a love and enthusiasm for science and technology, by sharing his vast knowledge, mentoring young people, teaching classes, giving workshops, leading archaeological trips, and writing science columns; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Witschey's innovation is responsible for two Guinness world records at the museum, the 1981 construction of a record-breaking giant analemmic sundial and the world's largest floating granite ball, the 29-ton Grand Kugel, in the Mary Morton Parsons Earth-Moon Sculpture situated in front of the museum; and

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58 WHEREAS, the Science Museum will continue to benefit from Dr. Witschey's knowledge and
59 expertise with his appointment as director emeritus effective July 1, 2007; now, therefore, be it

60 RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly
61 commend and congratulate Dr. Walter R. T. Witschey for his longtime service as director of the Science
62 Museum of Virginia; and, be it

63 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for
64 presentation to Dr. Walter R. T. Witschey as an expression of the General Assembly's gratitude for his
65 commitment to Virginia's young people and their families and best wishes for a rewarding retirement.