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## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 347

Offered February 6, 2008

*Celebrating the life of Jerry Laymon Falwell.*

Patrons—Byron, Abbitt, Albo, Alexander, Amundson, Athey, Bell, Carrico, Cline, Cole, Cosgrove, Cox, Crockett-Stark, Dance, Englin, Fralin, Frederick, Gear, Gilbert, Griffith, Hall, Hamilton, Hargrove, Hogan, Howell, A.T., Howell, W.J., Hugo, Hull, Iaquinto, Ingram, Janis, Joannou, Johnson, Jones, D.C., Jones, S.C., Kilgore, Landes, Lewis, Lingamfelter, Lohr, Loupassi, Marsden, Marshall, D.W., Marshall, R.G., Massie, May, McClellan, Melvin, Merricks, Miller, J.H., Miller, P.J., Moran, Morgan, Nixon, Nutter, O'Bannon, Oder, Orrock, Peace, Phillips, Plum, Pogge, Poindexter, Purkey, Putney, Rust, Saxman, Scott, E.T., Scott, J.M., Sherwood, Sickles, Spruill, Suit, Tata, Toscano, Valentine, Ware, O., Ware, R.L., Watts and Wright; Senators: Cuccinelli, Hurt, Martin, McDougle, Newman, Obenshain, Ruff, Smith, Stuart and Vogel

WHEREAS, Jerry Laymon Falwell of Lynchburg, founder and pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church for 51 years, founder and chancellor of Liberty University for 36 years, and one of America's most influential leaders, died on May 15, 2007; and

WHEREAS, Jerry Falwell was a devoted husband to his wife of 49 years, Macel; a beloved father to his children, Jerry Jr., Jeannie, and Jonathan; and an adored grandfather of his eight grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Jerry Falwell's ancestors were among the first settlers of the Virginia Colony that inhabited the Chesapeake Bay area near the mouth of the James River in the 1600s, migrated west to Buckingham County in the 1700s, and finally moved west in the 1830s to Campbell County, where many members of the family remain today; Jerry Falwell's paternal great-grandfather, Hezekiah Carey Falwell, and his brother John moved to Campbell County from Buckingham in the 1850s and purchased the farm where Jerry was born and where his twin brother Gene still resides, which is situated adjacent to the campus of Liberty University; and

WHEREAS, Jerry Falwell was born on August 11, 1933, to Carey and Helen Falwell, and his father was a successful businessman who operated passenger bus lines in the 1920s between Washington, D.C., and Durham, North Carolina, and owned an oil distributorship, numerous gas stations, a hotel, a dinner club, and other businesses; and

WHEREAS, Jerry Falwell attended Lynchburg College and graduated from Baptist Bible College in Springfield, Missouri; and

WHEREAS, after graduation, Jerry Falwell founded the Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, which he started in 1956 with 35 charter members who first met in an abandoned soft drink bottling plant, and the church has become one of America's largest and fastest-growing churches with more than 25,000 members; and

WHEREAS, Jerry Falwell founded Liberty University in 1971 with 154 students and at the time of his death, the university had grown to over 10,000 students in residence and nearly 20,000 in distance learning programs, making it the largest private university in Virginia, with more than 125,000 alumni, and the largest Evangelical Christian university in the world; and

WHEREAS, today, Liberty University is one of Lynchburg's largest employers and its campus occupies over 3,000,000 square feet on 4,800 acres located on a mountain that overlooks the City of Lynchburg; and an eight-acre stone "monogram" of the school's symbol "LU" can be seen from the Blue Ridge Parkway 25 miles to the west; and

WHEREAS, Jerry Falwell was proud of his Lynchburg and Virginia roots and often remarked that there was no better place in the world to live, and he continually worked toward the betterment of his hometown and the Commonwealth, often jokingly reminding audiences in auditoriums across the nation that all of the other states were once a part of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, through his Old Time Gospel Hour television program, Jerry Falwell presented the Gospel of Jesus Christ to millions of people over the course of 50 years of continuous broadcasting of worship services held at Thomas Road Baptist Church and Liberty University, and his broadcasting network now reaches more than 2.3 billion persons worldwide; and

WHEREAS, a strong proponent of Christian education, Jerry Falwell founded schools that emphasize academic excellence, traditional values, and a Christian worldview, including Liberty Christian Academy, Liberty University, Liberty University School of Law, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, and other related schools; and

WHEREAS, as a champion for the unborn, Jerry Falwell founded the Liberty Godparent Home for Unwed Mothers in 1982, which is located on the Liberty University campus, and its affiliated network of 1,500 homes nationwide has provided free assistance to thousands of young, pregnant girls and has

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51 placed hundreds of children in adoptive families; and

52 WHEREAS, Jerry Falwell also founded the Elim Home for Alcoholics and Drug-Addicted Men in  
53 1959, which provides hope and healing for individuals and their families that are ravaged by alcoholism  
54 and substance abuse; and

55 WHEREAS, Jerry Falwell established the Moral Majority in 1979 and worked to register millions of  
56 new voters, encouraging people of all faiths to become involved in promoting the time-honored values  
57 of America's Founding Fathers, and he became nationally known as the founder of the Religious Right;  
58 and

59 WHEREAS, earnestly following the Great Commission, Jerry Falwell supported thousands of  
60 missionaries and missionary programs, often personally leading humanitarian efforts in Third World  
61 nations and encouraging tens of thousands of Liberty University students and individuals influenced by  
62 his ministry to reach out to suffering people around the world; and

63 WHEREAS, taking literally the biblical admonition to defend the poor, Jerry Falwell devoted a great  
64 deal of his ministry to helping individuals and families in need, providing clothing, food, assistance in  
65 paying utility bills and general expenses, free camping for underprivileged children, and funds for  
66 inner-city ministries in Lynchburg and across the nation; and

67 WHEREAS, in adherence to the Abrahamic Covenant, Jerry Falwell was a strong advocate of Israel,  
68 leading more than 30 tours over a period of 30 years to the tiny Middle Eastern democracy and  
69 maintaining a personal friendship with Israeli prime ministers, including Menachem Begin and Benjamin  
70 Netanyahu, and publicly pledging unswerving support for Israel; and

71 WHEREAS, Jerry Falwell was a patriot, who proudly displayed his love for America, annually  
72 showcasing the nation's birthday at the Independence Day "Celebrate America" festivities on the Liberty  
73 University campus and twice touring the nation with Liberty University students conducting the "I Love  
74 America" and "God Bless America" campaigns in all 50 state capitals; and

75 WHEREAS, following Jerry Falwell's passing, many thousands of people wrote expressing their  
76 condolences and giving personal testimony as to how he had a profound and positive impact on their  
77 lives, not only through his many outreach ministries, but personally through telephone calls, letters,  
78 private meetings, and his unheralded generosity; and

79 WHEREAS, Jerry Falwell was a man of remarkable faith, vision, prayer, courage, leadership, and  
80 compassion with a genuine love for others and a devotion to God and country that inspired goodness in  
81 the lives of millions of people, but he preferred to remain a simple man of the people who was just  
82 "Jerry" to all who knew and loved him; now, therefore, be it

83 RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly note with  
84 deep sadness the passing of an honored gentleman and outstanding Virginian, Jerry Laymon Falwell;  
85 and, be it

86 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution  
87 for presentation to the family of Jerry Laymon Falwell as an expression of the General Assembly's  
88 respect and admiration for his exemplary life and his commitment to the citizens of the Commonwealth  
89 and the nation.