

2008 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 395

Celebrating the life of Mitchell Van Yahres.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 22, 2008
Agreed to by the Senate, February 28, 2008

WHEREAS, Mitchell Van Yahres of Charlottesville, age 81, a beloved citizen of the Commonwealth and a greatly admired former member of the House of Delegates, died on February 8, 2008; and

WHEREAS, Mitchell "Mitch" Van Yahres was born in Minneola, New York, on October 21, 1926, the son of George and Marcelle Van Yahres, received a bachelor's degree from Cornell University, and served his country in the United States Army Air Force from 1944 to 1945 during World War II; and

WHEREAS, Mitch Van Yahres married his college sweetheart, Elizabeth Franklin of McKeesport, Pennsylvania, in 1948 and the couple raised five beloved children; and

WHEREAS, Mitch Van Yahres was a certified arborist and tree surgeon, and he moved with his family to Charlottesville in 1949 to build his family's tree preservation business; and

WHEREAS, concern for the well-being of his community led Mitch Van Yahres to successfully run for a seat on the Charlottesville City Council in 1968, and he served his fellow citizens with distinction until 1976; and

WHEREAS, as mayor of Charlottesville from 1970 to 1972, Mitch Van Yahres' idealism and compassion for others once compelled him to order a shanty moved from a slum area into a trendy shopping center to impress upon affluent area citizens the conditions under which the area's poor people lived; and

WHEREAS, a dedicated and hardworking public servant, Mitch Van Yahres received the Democratic Party nomination for election to the House of Delegates and prevailed in a special election in January 1981; and

WHEREAS, Delegate Van Yahres was well-known during his 24 years as a member of the House of Delegates as a tireless advocate for the poor and the powerless and was often referred to by his close colleagues as the "conscience of the House"; and

WHEREAS, Delegate Van Yahres was an able and conscientious lawmaker, and he worked diligently to enact important legislation for the citizens of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, Delegate Van Yahres offered many thought provoking measures such as legislation to add a 60 cent-per-pack tax to cigarettes; additional funding for Medicaid to help low-income families; a bill to repeal a state ban on civil unions between same sex partners; and most notably, his symbolic House Joint Resolution No. 112, which urged General Assembly members to go on a "welfare diet," limiting their food budget for two weeks to "the same amount of money that is allotted in food stamps to a single individual"; and

WHEREAS, in 2001 the General Assembly overwhelmingly adopted Delegate Van Yahres' resolution that expressed profound regret for the state's involvement in eugenics during the 1920s, which led to the involuntary sterilization of thousands of people in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, committed to improving the quality of life of his fellow citizens, Mitch Van Yahres served on many local nonprofit boards, including the United Way and Children, Youth, and Family Services; helped establish through his church one of the first private nonprofit housing developments for low-income families in the city; and was one of the founding members of the Charlottesville Housing Foundation; and

WHEREAS, Delegate Van Yahres was a faithful and active member of Holy Comforter Catholic Church in Charlottesville; and

WHEREAS, Mitch Van Yahres will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his devoted wife Betty; his three sons Mike, Mark, and Keith, and his two daughters Beth and Laura, and their wonderful families, especially his 11 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren; his colleagues on both sides of the aisle; and the citizens of the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly mourn the loss of one of its greatly admired former members, Mitchell Van Yahres; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Mitchell Van Yahres as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

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