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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 85

Offered January 9, 2008

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Celebrating the life of Francis Bell, Jr.

Patron—Obenshain

WHEREAS, Francis Bell, Jr., of Harrisonburg, a respected bank executive and beloved community leader and benefactor, died on October 2, 2007; and

WHEREAS, a native of Dublin, Virginia, Francis Bell was born November 6, 1922, the son of Francis and Stella Currie Bell, graduated from Dublin High School in 1939, and attended Virginia Military Institute, following in the footsteps of his father and his grandfather; and

WHEREAS, during World War II, Francis Bell joined the United States Air Force, serving as technical sergeant and chief clerk with the 509th Composite Group and participating in the assembling of intelligence material for both historic atomic bomb attacks on Japan; and

WHEREAS, after the war, Francis Bell graduated from the University of Virginia with a degree in commerce in 1948, and soon after joined the state bank examiners, beginning what would be a distinguished 53-year career in banking; and

WHEREAS, Francis Bell moved with his family to Harrisonburg in 1960 to become the president of Rockingham National Bank, and by 1972, he had helped establish the bank consortium that formed the Valley of Virginia Bankshares; as an esteemed banker and civic leader, he also was elected president of the Virginia Bankers Association in that same year; and

WHEREAS, after a long and rewarding career, Francis Bell retired as the executive vice president of Dominion Bankshares in 1983, but he continued to be involved in banking until 2002 as a member relations consultant for the American Bankers Association, traveling all over the state; and

WHEREAS, an active community supporter all of his life, Francis Bell served for 37 years on the board, 16 years as chairman, of Sunnyside Retirement Community and was named Trustee of the Year by the Virginia Association of Non-Profit Health Organizations in 2000; he was also the board president of Shenandoah Valley Educational Television Corporation; and

WHEREAS, Francis Bell gave his time and immense talent as a supporter, member, and leader of numerous professional and civic organizations, including the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Chamber of Commerce, Harrisonburg United Way, Spotswood Country Club, Harrisonburg Kiwanis Club, Harrisonburg Rotary Club, as well as the board of visitors of Radford College; and

WHEREAS, Francis Bell served on the James Madison University board of visitors from 1972 to 1980 and as rector from 1974 to 1980; and in the fall of 1982, Bell Hall, a new substance-free dormitory was completed and named in his honor for his longtime service to the university; and

WHEREAS, since the 1980s, Francis Bell served as a member and as both state and regional chairman of Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), a Department of Defense organization that promotes the relationship between employers and national guard and reserve employees; and he received the Secretary of Defense Medal for Outstanding Public Service, as well as the Virginia National Guard Legion of Merit; and

WHEREAS, over the years, Francis Bell received many distinguished awards and countless accolades for his outstanding public service, including the 1984 Outstanding Service Award by the Virginia Council on Education; and

WHEREAS, Francis Bell was a faithful member and elder of First Presbyterian Church in Harrisonburg and was active in the church's many missions in the community; and

WHEREAS, a compassionate man who was deeply devoted to his family, Francis Bell will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his devoted wife of 57 years, Isabelle; his three children, Martha, Libby, and Francis, their wonderful families, and especially his 11 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren; his numerous other loving family members and friends; and the citizens of Harrisonburg; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly mourn the passing of a fine community leader and outstanding Virginian, Francis Bell, Jr.; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Francis Bell, Jr., as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

INTRODUCED

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