

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 389

Celebrating the life of William E. Fears.

Agreed to by the Senate, January 29, 2009
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 20, 2009

WHEREAS, William E. Fears of Onancock, a beloved citizen of the Commonwealth and a stalwart leader in the Senate of Virginia from 1968 to 1992, died on August 25, 2008; and

WHEREAS, William E. "Bill" Fears was born in 1920 in Jonesboro, Arkansas, and left home at the age of 13 to live with relatives on Maryland's Eastern Shore and in New York, where he sought a better education and greater opportunities; and

WHEREAS, Bill Fears earned an engineering degree from Yale University in 1943, served his country during World War II in the United States Army as a lieutenant in the 92nd Bombardment Group in England, and after his military service received a law degree from the University of Cincinnati Law School in 1948; and

WHEREAS, a self-made man, Bill Fears worked as a patent attorney in Pittsburgh and New York before establishing his own local law practice in Accomack County on Virginia's Eastern Shore in 1950, and he also served for a time as the commonwealth's attorney for the county; and

WHEREAS, desiring to make a difference in the Commonwealth, Bill Fears became involved in state politics and was elected in 1967 to represent the residents of the 3rd District, which consisted of Northampton and Accomack Counties and which later included part of James City County, Williamsburg, and a small portion of Newport News; and

WHEREAS, Senator Fears was an able lawmaker and an influential member of the Democratic Caucus and chair of the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee; and

WHEREAS, Senator Fears was instrumental in the passage of many of the Commonwealth's insurance laws, the driving force behind legislation that created Accomack's community college and the state's lottery, and a fervent advocate for Virginia's watermen; and

WHEREAS, a colorful, gregarious, and hardworking legislator, Senator Fears was noted for driving his Harley-Davidson motorcycle to the Capitol in Richmond and renowned for always strongly speaking his mind on the many causes he championed for the citizens of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, Senator Fears loved his hometown of Accomac, and throughout his life and career remained steadfastly committed to enhancing the quality of life for all of his neighbors on Virginia's beautiful Eastern Shore; and

WHEREAS, Bill Fears will be fondly remembered for his great passion for public service and his devotion to his family and greatly missed by his wife of 64 years, Dr. Belle DeCormis Fears; his children, Barbara Haynes and Dr. Richard Bradford Fears and their wonderful families, including four grandchildren and one great-grandchild; his colleagues on both sides of the aisle; and the citizens of the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly note with great sadness the loss of one of its admired former members, William E. Fears; and, be it

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

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