

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 479

Celebrating the life of Willie Saunders Watkins III.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 25, 2009
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 27, 2009

WHEREAS, Willie Saunders Watkins III of Richmond, a respected citizen and an outstanding community supporter and businessman, died on January 23, 2009; and

WHEREAS, Willie Saunders "Bill" Watkins III was a graduate and valedictorian of the Class of 1958 at Maggie Walker High School and received a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in biology from Howard University; and

WHEREAS, after college, Bill Watkins served as an associate professor at his alma mater, Howard University, and taught at the Clark Atlanta University Center; and

WHEREAS, Bill Watkins loved teaching and would continue to teach young people and adult professionals throughout his life, and he was equally committed to helping his family in the operation of the Watkins' mortuary business founded in Richmond by his grandfather and father; and

WHEREAS, Bill Watkins completed mortuary training at John Tyler Community College so he could carry on his family's legacy, and he eventually became the president, manager, and owner, along with his sister Valorie Patrice Watkins, of W.S. Watkins & Son Funeral Home; and

WHEREAS, Bill Watkins was a consultant for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, helping to develop guidelines for the prevention of the transmission of AIDS in the workplace and teaching funeral directors how to protect themselves; and

WHEREAS, Bill Watkins also worked with the Environmental Protection Agency on a study of the effects of formaldehyde in funeral homes; and

WHEREAS, a lifelong learner, Bill Watkins attended American University and the Medical College of Virginia and became certified in the history and philosophy of science and postmortem eye donor procedures; and

WHEREAS, Bill Watkins wrote textbooks, laboratory manuals, and published articles to educate and train funeral directors in the latest scientific methods, and he was the editor of the *Virginia Morticians Association Bulletin* for seven years; and

WHEREAS, over the years, Bill Watkins generously gave his time and talents to many professional organizations, serving as president of the Virginia Morticians Association and as chair of the Education Commission of the National Funeral Directors and Morticians Association; and

WHEREAS, Bill Watkins was a faithful member of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Richmond, where he served on the board of trustees and sang as tenor and soloist in the Sanctuary, Men's, and Mass choirs; and

WHEREAS, Bill Watkins loved spectator sports and was a skilled ballroom dancer, and he will be fondly remembered for his "infectious laugh and razor-sharp wit"; and

WHEREAS, Bill Watkins will be greatly missed by his wife of 39 years, Elizabeth Dianne Nelson Watkins; his son, Willie S. Watkins IV; his two daughters, Karen Watkins-Westebbe and Lauren Watkins; his sister, Valorie Patrice Watkins; his grandson; and his many friends and colleagues; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly note with great sadness the passing of an outstanding Virginian, Willie Saunders Watkins III; and, be it

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