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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 197

Offered February 19, 2010

Celebrating the life of Samuel Morgan Church, Jr.

Patrons—Puckett, Deeds, Edwards, Puller, Reynolds and Wampler

WHEREAS, Samuel Morgan Church, Jr., the former United Mine Workers of America president, died on July 14, 2009; and

WHEREAS, a native of West Virginia, Samuel "Sam" Church was born on September 20, 1936, to Samuel and Helen Cook Church and was one of eight children; and

WHEREAS, as a young man, Sam Church moved to Baltimore and worked for a sugar plant; in 1965, he returned home to Southwest Virginia and began work as an electrician and mechanic, first at Clinchfield Coal Company and later at Westmoreland Coal Company; and

WHEREAS, Sam Church became involved with the United Mine Workers of America Local 1055 and with a flair for organizing and rallying people, rose quickly through the union ranks until 1975, when he joined the staff of the United Mine Workers of America headquarters; and

WHEREAS, Sam Church succeeded to the presidency of the United Mine Workers of America in 1979 and served until 1982; he inherited a union that faced many difficulties and shrinking membership; and

WHEREAS, a determined and resourceful leader, Sam Church worked diligently on behalf of the mine workers for improved mine safety regulations and benefits for black lung disease victims; and

WHEREAS, Sam Church also pushed for extended pension rights to the widows of miners who had retired under the 1950 Health and Retirement Benefit Plan; the extended pension rights affected approximately 40,000 women; and

WHEREAS, after a failed bid for a full five-year term as president, Sam Church returned to Virginia, where he continued to work in the coal mines for a period of time; and

WHEREAS, Sam Church was actively involved in the community, serving on the Appalachia Town Council and the Wise County Board of Supervisors; he also became coordinator of the Virginia Coal Miners' Political Action Committee, where he worked with members of the General Assembly on both sides of the aisle; and

WHEREAS, born into a coal-mining family and a coal miner himself, Sam Church understood the experiences of the hardworking men and women who earned their living as coal miners and worked diligently on their behalf for much of his life; and

WHEREAS, Sam Church will be fondly remembered and sorely missed by his loving wife of 31 years, Patti Page Church; his children and their families; and his numerous friends and admirers; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly note with great sadness the loss of a dedicated union leader and public servant, Samuel Morgan Church, Jr.; and, be it

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

INTRODUCED

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