

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 793

Commending Chief Justice Leroy Rountree Hassell, Sr.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 4, 2011
 Agreed to by the Senate, February 17, 2011

WHEREAS, Chief Justice Leroy Rountree Hassell, Sr., a Justice on the Supreme Court since 1989 and Chief Justice since February 1, 2003, concluded his second term as Chief Justice on January 31, 2010; and

WHEREAS, Chief Justice Leroy Rountree Hassell, Sr., was the 24th Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia, and the first African American to serve as Chief Justice; and

WHEREAS, as Chief Justice, Leroy Rountree Hassell, Sr., served as the administrative head of the Judicial System ensuring its efficient and effective operation, while striving to administer a judicial system in which "all Virginians are treated fairly with dignity, equality and respect"; and

WHEREAS, during his tenure as Chief Justice, Leroy Rountree Hassell, Sr., served with distinction as Chair of the Judicial Council and the Committee on District Courts, and President of the Judicial Conference of Virginia and the Judicial Conference of Virginia for District Courts, making certain that committees and commissions under his direction reflected the geographical, racial, and gender diversity of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, as Chief Justice, Leroy Rountree Hassell, Sr., established the "Commission on Virginia Courts in the 21st Century: To Benefit All, To Exclude None," to make recommendations to ensure that Virginia's Court System continues to effectively and impartially deliver justice to all Virginians; and

WHEREAS, as Chief Justice, Leroy Rountree Hassell, Sr., established an annual Indigent Defense Training seminar to provide free continuing legal education to practitioners of indigent defense, and with the support of Chief Justice Leroy Rountree Hassell, Sr., the General Assembly increased compensation paid to court-appointed criminal defense attorneys and public defenders; and

WHEREAS, as Chief Justice, Leroy Rountree Hassell, Sr., worked to increase the availability of pro bono legal services, challenging the Virginia Bar Association and other statewide bar associations, local bar associations, and the Virginia State Bar to work together to expand services for indigent persons and ensure that all Virginians have access to high-quality legal representation; and

WHEREAS, under the leadership of Chief Justice Leroy Rountree Hassell, Sr., the Office of the Executive Secretary established an annual course on the management of capital murder cases for circuit court judges, providing additional tools for the efficient administration of justice in these cases; and

WHEREAS, as Chief Justice, Leroy Rountree Hassell, Sr., secured funding from the General Assembly to create a foreign language interpreter program and hire full-time foreign language interpreters to serve the courts of the Commonwealth thereby improving the services provided and reducing the cost of interpreter services; and

WHEREAS, as Chief Justice, Leroy Rountree Hassell, Sr., appointed the Commission on Mental Health Law Reform to conduct a comprehensive examination of Virginia's mental health laws and services and to recommend reforms to Virginia's mental health laws, many of which were enacted by the General Assembly, including improvements to the involuntary commitment process; and

WHEREAS, as Chief Justice, Leroy Rountree Hassell, Sr., successfully worked with the General Assembly to reform and restructure the magistrate system, improving oversight of and standards for magistrates; and

WHEREAS, as Chief Justice, Leroy Rountree Hassell, Sr., successfully obtained from the General Assembly increased compensation for all judges and Judicial Branch staff allowing Virginia's courts to benefit from the retention of experienced employees and the attraction of highly qualified applicants; and

WHEREAS, with the guidance of Chief Justice Leroy Rountree Hassell, Sr., the General Assembly created the Courts Technology Fund, which supports improvement of the courts' information technology systems and the use of technology to improve case processing for litigants and the courts, including online services such as electronic filing and online payments; and

WHEREAS, as Chief Justice, Leroy Rountree Hassell, Sr., established the Electronic Filing Committee, composed of judges, attorneys, clerks of court, and staff members of the Office of the Executive Secretary, to guide the Judicial System's electronic filing initiative; and

WHEREAS, under the leadership of Chief Justice Leroy Rountree Hassell, Sr., online legal research through the Fastcase system was made available, without charge, to all members of the Virginia State Bar; and

WHEREAS, as Chief Justice, Leroy Rountree Hassell, Sr., established the Supreme Court of Virginia Historical Commission to preserve the oral histories of members of the bench, the bar and court

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administration, and archive historical records and artifacts of Virginia's Judicial System; and

WHEREAS, under the direction of Chief Justice Leroy Rountree Hassell, Sr., the Journey Through Justice website was created, which provides an interactive website with supplemental educational materials on the judiciary, allowing students and teachers to virtually experience the courtroom; and

WHEREAS, a native of Norfolk, Chief Justice Leroy Rountree Hassell, Sr., has served and continues to serve Virginia proudly in many professional and civic roles with an enduring commitment to the people of the Commonwealth, and with an emphasis on the importance of faith and humility in such service; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Chief Justice Leroy Rountree Hassell, Sr., for his dedicated service and inspired leadership as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Chief Justice Leroy Rountree Hassell, Sr., as an expression of the General Assembly's gratitude and appreciation.