

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 896

Celebrating the life of FitzGerald Bemiss.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 18, 2011
Agreed to by the Senate, February 24, 2011

WHEREAS, FitzGerald Bemiss, a former member of the House of Delegates and Virginia Senate, respected business owner, and influential advocate for the preservation of Virginia's scenic lands, died on February 7, 2011; and

WHEREAS, a native of Richmond, FitzGerald Bemiss was educated at St. Christopher's School, Woodberry Forest School, and the University of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, FitzGerald Bemiss proudly served his country during World War II in the United States Navy onboard destroyers deployed in the Atlantic Ocean; and

WHEREAS, desirous to be of service to his fellow citizens, FitzGerald Bemiss served the Commonwealth with great distinction as a member of the House of Delegates from 1955 to 1959 and as a member of the Virginia Senate from 1960 to 1967; and

WHEREAS, during FitzGerald Bemiss' tenure in the General Assembly, the Commonwealth faced tumultuous times as the landmark Supreme Court decision Brown v. Board of Education led to a campaign of massive resistance; and

WHEREAS, FitzGerald Bemiss served as an influential member of both the Gray and Perrow Commissions, which were tasked with developing plans to desegregate the Commonwealth's schools; and

WHEREAS, an admired statesman, FitzGerald Bemiss also served on the Virginia Tax Study Commission and Metropolitan Areas Commission, providing influential guidance and insight; and

WHEREAS, a lifelong conservationist, FitzGerald Bemiss served as chair of the Virginia Outdoor Recreation Study Commission and Virginia Commission on Outdoor Recreation, working to preserve the Commonwealth's open spaces for current and future residents to enjoy; and

WHEREAS, a nationally recognized leader, FitzGerald Bemiss was appointed by President Ronald Reagan to the board of the National Advisory Committee on Oceans and Atmosphere and by President George H.W. Bush to serve as the vice-chair of the board of the United States Naval Academy; and

WHEREAS, after exemplary service to the Commonwealth, FitzGerald Bemiss left the legislature to take over his family's business, the Virginia Skyline Co., which operated concessions along the Skyline Drive; he also served as president of FitzGerald & Co.; and

WHEREAS, FitzGerald Bemiss provided valuable insight and guidance as a member of the board of directors of State-Planters Bank, subsequently United Virginia Bank and Crestar Bank, from 1963 to 1992, and as a board member of James River Paper Company from 1972 until 1995; and

WHEREAS, FitzGerald Bemiss generously gave of his time and talent to numerous organizations, including the Virginia Historical Society and the University of Virginia, where he was honored and received the prestigious Raven Award; and

WHEREAS, diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in his later years, FitzGerald Bemiss approached the management of his illness with his characteristic humor and resolve, supporting Virginia Commonwealth University's efforts to establish a center to study the causes of Parkinson's disease; and

WHEREAS, a man of great wisdom and foresight, FitzGerald Bemiss leaves behind a sterling legacy of service to his family, community, Commonwealth, and country; and

WHEREAS, FitzGerald Bemiss will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his wife of 57 years, Margaret Reid Page Bemiss; children, Madge and Samuel and their families, including six grandchildren; many relatives and friends; his colleagues on both sides of the aisle; and the citizens of the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly mourn the passing of an esteemed citizen of the Commonwealth and one of its former members, FitzGerald Bemiss; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of FitzGerald Bemiss as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

ENROLLED

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