

2011 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 41

Celebrating the life of Beth A. Brown.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, January 14, 2011

WHEREAS, Beth A. Brown, a young, vibrant Roanoke native and astronomer who shared her love of the stars and space with students and others, died at the age of 39 on October 5, 2008; and

WHEREAS, Beth Brown loved jazz, enjoyed working in her yard, and most of all, derived great satisfaction from being part of the Single Adult, Usher, and Deaf Ministries at Metropolitan Baptist Church in Washington, D.C.; and

WHEREAS, while Beth Brown was a consummate professional, she was also approachable and a person of great humility; and

WHEREAS, Beth Brown was born February 4, 1969, the lovely and charismatic daughter of Frances B. Brown and the late Robert Brown, adored sister of younger brother Larry Brown, and cousin of Vivian Bratton who was like a sister; and

WHEREAS, a graduate of William Fleming High School and valedictorian of the Class of 1987, Beth Brown earned an undergraduate degree in physics from Howard University *summa cum laude* in 1991 and was elected to the Phi Beta Kappa Society; and

WHEREAS, Beth Brown earned both a master's degree and doctorate from the University of Michigan, becoming the first African-American woman to obtain a doctorate from the University of Michigan's Department of Astronomy; and

WHEREAS, as a graduate student at the University of Michigan, Beth Brown helped create a one-credit short course in naked-eye astronomy — what people can see with their eyes or binoculars — for new students to the field, which is still being offered more than a decade after it was created; and

WHEREAS, as the first African-American woman with a Ph.D. in Astronomy not to begin her professional career in academia, Dr. Brown accepted a position as an astrophysicist at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland; and

WHEREAS, in this position, Dr. Brown was interviewed by media outlets including CNN about astronomical events such as solar eclipses and also managed a website for a NASA outreach project that is exploring the Milky Way Galaxy; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Brown was selected in 2006 to participate in the NASA Administrator's Fellowship Project, a professional development opportunity for NASA employees to teach and conduct research at minority institutions; the project also offers professional development opportunities to faculty who teach in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics at minority institutions, supporting NASA's goal of strengthening the agency's and the nation's future workforce; and

WHEREAS, in her attempt to share astronomy with students, Dr. Brown was also a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Howard University Department of Physics and Astronomy, where she created a series of lectures used to start an introductory astronomy course and made recommendations for possible future uses of the university's planetarium; and

WHEREAS, as a NASA fellow, Dr. Brown continued her black hole research and published articles in *The Astrophysical Journal* and *Bulletin of the American Astronomical Society* while also developing and evaluating education projects at NASA's Office of Education; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Brown's work for the Office of Education included overseeing a group of higher education institutions piloting a new education project, developing a request for a pre- and in-service teacher certificate project, and organizing NASA participation in education initiatives outside of NASA; and

WHEREAS, at the time of her death, Dr. Brown was Assistant Director for Science Communications and Higher Education in the Science and Exploration Directorate at the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center; and

WHEREAS, The Women in Astronomy and Space Science Conference 2009 was dedicated to the memory of Dr. Beth A. Brown; and

WHEREAS, Beth Brown's big, bright smile is seen in photographs and in memories; she will never be forgotten by her many friends, colleagues, and those whose lives she touched; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the House of Delegates note with great sadness the loss of noted astronomer, Beth A. Brown; 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 Beth A. Brown as an expression of the House of Delegates' respect for her memory.

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