

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 441

Celebrating the life of the Reverend Dr. Walter Henry Maxwell, Sr., former member of the Senate of Virginia.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 10, 2011
 Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 18, 2011

WHEREAS, Walter Henry Maxwell, Sr., was born on April 3, 1935, in Reidsville, North Carolina, and was called home to glory on November 13, 2010; and

WHEREAS, Walter Henry Maxwell, Sr., a lifelong resident of Newport News, graduated from Carver High School in 1951, continued his education at Norfolk State University and Virginia State University, and earned the Bachelor of Theology degree from Virginia Seminary and College; and

WHEREAS, in 1974 the Virginia Seminary and College conferred upon him the Doctor of Divinity degree, and in 1992 he received the honorary Doctor of Public Service from Commonwealth College; and

WHEREAS, Walter Henry Maxwell, Sr., began his public service career as the Delegate to the Virginia General Assembly from the 95th House District, and after ten years of service in the House, he was elected to the 2nd Senate District in a special election in December 1992 to fill the unexpired term of Congressman Robert C. Scott, where he served for ten years; and

WHEREAS, as a member of the House of Delegates, he served as a member of the House Committees on Health, Welfare and Institutions, Conservation and Natural Resources, Claims, and Chesapeake and Its Tributaries; and

WHEREAS, as a member of the Senate, he was a member of the Senate Committees on Rehabilitation and Social Services, Commerce and Labor, General Laws, and Transportation; and

WHEREAS, Walter Henry Maxwell, Sr., was a diligent and effective legislator whose unwavering concern and strong voice for the poor and the oppressed was reflected in his legislative initiatives each year; and

WHEREAS, during his tenure in the General Assembly, he had significant legislation passed that reduced the blood alcohol content level required to make it easier to remove drunk drivers from the roads, established the Electronic Benefits Transferring Program in Virginia, and developed programs for suspended and expelled students; and

WHEREAS, he worked tirelessly for equal education opportunities, more African American judges on state courts, funding for early childhood education, drug courts, and the rehabilitation of former offenders; and

WHEREAS, as the second chairman of the Joint Subcommittee Studying the Status and Needs of African American Males in Virginia, he effectively brought attention to the ongoing plight of African American men, the issue of felons' rights restoration, the need for racial and ethnic diversity in health care, and the injustice of racial profiling, commonly referred to as "driving while Black"; and

WHEREAS, his work also made Virginians aware of the problem of student credit card debt and its immediate and long-term implications and consequences for students and the Commonwealth's economy; and

WHEREAS, a community activist, Walter Henry Maxwell, Sr., was instrumental in securing funding to preserve the Newsome House Museum and Cultural Center in Newport News and the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind at Hampton; he was a lifetime member and past president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Newport News Branch; a member of the Boards of Trustees of the Peninsula Economic Development Council, the United Way of the Peninsula, and the Newport News Alliance for Youth; a member of Prince Hall Masons, the Hampton University's Minister's Conference, the National Baptist Convention U.S.A., the National Black Caucus of State Legislators, the Conference of Southern Legislators; a former member of the Old Dominion University Research Foundation; and member emeritus of the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus; and

WHEREAS, imbued with an unshakeable faith in God and ordained to the Gospel ministry, Walter Henry Maxwell, Sr., completed his seminary education and was called to the pastorate at Ivy Baptist Church in Newport News, where he served as the esteemed and beloved under-Shepherd for 37 years until his retirement; and

WHEREAS, during his pastorate, the congregation grew from 70 to 800 members, and he led the church to minister to the community through its child-care center, community outreach ministries, and Caring and Sharing Program, which provides counseling for drug abusers to assist them in ending their addiction to drugs; and

WHEREAS, an astute and savvy political leader, Walter Henry Maxwell, Sr., was a quiet and

soft-spoken man with a gentle spirit, a consensus builder, a Virginia gentleman, an impeccable dresser, a gifted orator, and when he sang, his deep and mellow voice resonated throughout the sanctuary; and

WHEREAS, Walter Henry Maxwell, Sr., was remembered and ushered from this world into eternal life by loving family and faithful friends, a devoted congregation and supportive colleagues, and an overflow of citizens of Newport News and the Commonwealth whom he touched during his lifetime, in a ceremony tinged with sorrow but filled with faith, joy, and a rousing celebratory spirit; and

WHEREAS, family and friends will forever cherish his memory, and Walter Henry Maxwell, Sr., will be revered for his tireless efforts and many years of service, like Nehemiah with the word of God in one hand and a sword in the other, "staying on the wall" to build a sure rampart to protect and ensure the rights, welfare, and prosperity of the people of the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of the Reverend Dr. Walter Henry Maxwell, Sr., former member of the Senate of Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of the Reverend Dr. Walter Henry Maxwell, Sr., as an expression of the General Assembly's gratitude for his service and contributions and great respect for his memory.