

2011 SPECIAL SESSION I

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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 5075

Offered July 29, 2011

Celebrating the life of Ruth Jones Harris.

Patrons—Dance and Abbott

Unanimous consent to introduce

WHEREAS, Ruth Jones Harris, the first of six children born to the late Daniel and Novella Jones on February 1, 1925, in Dendron, quietly entered into eternal rest on May 22, 2011; and

WHEREAS, when Ruth Jones Harris was a small child, her family relocated to Hopewell where she attended the Hopewell Public Schools and was elected senior class president of Carter G. Woodson High School in 1942; and

WHEREAS, after graduation from high school, Ruth Jones Harris graduated from Virginia State College of Beauty Culture and Cosmetology in 1943, and later studied social work at Virginia Union University and attended Virginia State University where she matriculated in business administration and early childhood development courses; and

WHEREAS, in 1986 Ruth Jones Harris was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Virginia University of Lynchburg; and

WHEREAS, in 1953, as a result of her entrepreneurial spirit and strong business acumen, Ruth Jones Harris established Harris and Young Beauty Salon, and in 1959, she opened the Harris Snack Bar, a family restaurant which she operated with her husband; under her leadership as manager and head cook, she transformed the Snack Bar into a fixture of the Hopewell community; and the Snack Bar became the meeting place in the Hopewell community, hosting Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., during his Hopewell stop in the 1960s; and

WHEREAS, Ruth Jones Harris was rooted and grounded in her Christian faith and was committed to living a spiritual life; when her husband, the Reverend Dr. Curtis W. Harris, entered the Gospel ministry in 1957 and was called to the pastorate in 1966, she became First Lady, simultaneously, of First Baptist Church Bermuda Hundred in Chester, Gilfield Baptist Church in Ivor, and Union Baptist Church in Hopewell; and

WHEREAS, ever her husband's graceful and astute partner throughout the years, Ruth Jones Harris served as a Sunday School teacher and superintendent, president of the Missionary Circle, a Bible study instructor, a member of the Deaconess Board, and chairperson of the finance committee and Women's History Month committee; and

WHEREAS, as an extension of her Christian service, Ruth Jones Harris was a founder of the Usher's Union of Hopewell, Petersburg, and Vicinity; past Worthy Patron of the Lily of the Valley Chapter #44 Order of the Eastern Star; and actively involved in the local, state, and national levels of the International Association of Ministers' Wives and Ministers' Widows; and

WHEREAS, in September 1972, Ruth Jones Harris, together with her husband, opened the Union Day Care Center, Inc., and she prepared herself for this new enterprise by returning to college and establishing her membership in various professional childhood educational organizations, such as the American Childhood International, the Southside Association of Early Childhood Education, and the Virginia and National Association for the Education of Young Children; and

WHEREAS, as director of the day care center, Ruth Jones Harris also started a senior citizen program within the center's facilities to encourage and facilitate intergenerational understanding and relationships; as a result of her work, she was appointed by the Hopewell City Council to the Senior Citizens Commission serving from 1981 to 1985; and

WHEREAS, Ruth Jones Harris retired in 2000 from the Union Day Care Center, Inc., after 28 years of warming the hearts of children and seniors; and

WHEREAS, Ruth Jones Harris, "Ms. Ruth," as she was fondly called by many persons whose lives she touched, was the rock in her home and a pillar in her community, giving much of her time, talents, and resources in service as a grade mother in her children's school, a Girl Scout leader, a volunteer at the Hopewell Food Pantry, a member and officer in the Moses Life Insurance Company, and a member of the Parent Teacher Association; and

WHEREAS, Ruth Jones Harris was continuously by her husband's side as a foot soldier in the battle for social justice; her contributions to the Civil Rights Movement were acknowledged by the National Southern Christian Leadership Conference during its First Lady Award Celebration in 2007, when she became one of the first recipients of the Faithful Servant Award; and

WHEREAS, a dutiful and loving wife and mother, a woman with a tremendous passion for people,

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59 and unmovable in her faith in God, Ruth Jones Harris leaves behind her legacy and testimony for living
60 which is captured in the poignant lines of Psalm 121: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from
61 whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord"; and

62 WHEREAS, the loving memory of Ruth Jones Harris will live forever in the hearts of her dear
63 husband, the Reverend Dr. Curtis W. Harris, her children and grandchildren, other relatives and many
64 friends, and her works will follow her; now, therefore, be it

65 RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby
66 note with great sadness the loss of Ruth Jones Harris, native daughter and quiet warrior; and, be it

67 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution
68 for presentation to the family of Ruth Jones Harris as an expression of the General Assembly's respect
69 for her memory.