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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 74

Offered January 11, 2012

Prefiled January 10, 2012

Celebrating the life of the Honorable Elmon Taylor Gray, former member of the Senate of Virginia.

Patrons—Farrell, Dance, Ingram, and Putney

WHEREAS, the Honorable Elmon Taylor Gray, born on May 1, 1925, in Suffolk, entered into eternal rest on September 27, 2011; and

WHEREAS, Elmon Taylor Gray attended Virginia Military Institute in the fall of 1942 and interrupted his studies in 1944 to join the United States Navy, serving on minesweepers in the South Pacific; after distinguished service as an ensign, he was honorably discharged in 1946, whereupon he returned to Virginia Military Institute and earned his undergraduate degree in 1947; and

WHEREAS, after graduation, Elmon Taylor Gray joined the family's business, Gray Lumber Company, in Waverly; in 1992, as GrayCo, the company expanded from timber and lumber into a diversified real estate holding company in which he served as president for many years, and at the time of his death he served as chairman; and

WHEREAS, Elmon Taylor Gray began his long illustrious career of public service to the Commonwealth with his appointment to the Sussex County School Board in 1963, and in 1972, he succeeded his distinguished father, Garland Gray, winning election to the Senate of Virginia and continuing a dynasty; and

WHEREAS, during the two decades of service in the Senate of Virginia, Elmon Taylor Gray, widely respected by colleagues of both parties, served as a member of the Senate Committees on Commerce and Labor, Finance, Transportation, and Rules; as the longtime chairman of the Senate Committee on Education and Health; and the groundbreaking improvements in higher education are attributable to his vision and leadership; and

WHEREAS, Elmon Taylor Gray, an astute businessman, brought his expertise in manufacturing and land development to the legislative process and is credited with helping to build and sustain the economy of Southside Virginia for over a generation; and

WHEREAS, during his legislative career, Elmon Taylor Gray was instrumental in the creation of the Virginia Horse Center in Lexington and the passage of legislation establishing Virginia's King holiday; he was active in efforts to build a horse-racing track in Hampton Roads after the approval of pari-mutuel betting in 1987; he was an advocate for gasoline retailers and the trucking industry; and, nearing retirement in 1992, he worked with Senate colleagues to reconfigure his district, the 16th Senatorial District, which resulted in the election of the district's first African American senator; and

WHEREAS, a devoted alumnus and former Board of Visitors president of Virginia Military Institute, Elmon Taylor Gray was a generous philanthropist and stalwart supporter of his alma mater; he raised millions for its endowment and supported its longstanding educational mission; and

WHEREAS, Elmon Taylor Gray was generous with his time, talents, and resources, and served as a member of numerous organizations, including the boards of Universal Leaf Tobacco, Dominion Resources, First and Merchants National Bank, and James River Bankshares Ltd.; as trustee emeritus of Elon University; as a trustee of the Virginia Historical Society, Historic Petersburg Foundation, and the Jamestown Yorktown Foundation, due to his great love of Virginia history; as president of the Virginia Military Institute Board of Visitors from 1964 to 1966, and president of the VMI Alumni Association from 1971 to 1973; and as co-general chairman and one of the lead contributors of The VMI Campaign, the first capital campaign which lasted from 1978 to 1990, during which time many endowments were established to support the institution; and

WHEREAS, his faithful devotion to Southside Virginia and genuine spirit of community service earned Elmon Taylor Gray many accolades, recognition, and awards during his lifetime, among them the Virginia Military Institute Foundation Distinguished Service Award in 1977; the New Market Medal in 1980, Virginia Military Institute's highest honor; the Virginia Military Institute Keydet Club's Spirit of VMI Award in 1991; the Gray-Minor Stadium, named in his honor in 2007; and the Harry F. Byrd, Jr. '35 Public Service Award in March 2009, in recognition of his outstanding service to the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, a generous philanthropist, Elmon Taylor Gray immersed himself in the life of his heavily rural senatorial district, and among his many philanthropies was the Appomattox Regional Governor's School for the Arts and Technology of which he was tremendously proud; and

WHEREAS, in retirement, Elmon Taylor Gray continued his keen interest in politics and was actively involved in the family business, including a land development project in eastern Henrico; and

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59 WHEREAS, his family, friends, and colleagues will forever and lovingly treasure the many stories,
60 bellowing laughter, and even the occasional scowl of the dapper gentleman from Waverly; now,
61 therefore, be it

62 RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby
63 note with great sadness the loss of the Honorable Elmon Taylor Gray, former member of the Senate of
64 Virginia; and, be it

65 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution
66 for presentation to the family of the Honorable Elmon Taylor Gray as an expression of the General
67 Assembly's great respect for his memory and outstanding contributions to the people of Southside
68 Virginia and the Commonwealth.