

2012 SESSION

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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 239

Offered March 5, 2012

Celebrating the life of the Honorable Elmon Taylor Gray.

Patrons—Colgan, Barker, Black, Blevins, Carrico, Deeds, Ebbin, Edwards, Favola, Garrett, Hanger, Herring, Howell, Locke, Lucas, Marsden, Marsh, Martin, McDougle, McEachin, McWaters, Miller, J.C., Miller, Y.B., Newman, Norment, Northam, Obenshain, Petersen, Puckett, Puller, Reeves, Ruff, Saslaw, Smith, Stanley, Stosch, Stuart, Vogel, Wagner and Watkins; Delegate: Farrell

WHEREAS, the Honorable Elmon Taylor Gray, a proud alumnus of Virginia Military Institute, admired business leader, noted philanthropist, and former member of the Senate of Virginia, entered into eternal rest on September 27, 2011; and

WHEREAS, Elmon Taylor Gray, born on May 1, 1925, attended Virginia Military Institute (VMI) 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 VMI and earned his undergraduate degree in 1947; and

WHEREAS, upon completion of his military service and education, 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; 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; in 1971, Elmon Taylor Gray was elected to the Senate of Virginia, occupying the seat that had been held by his father, Senator Garland Gray, and ably represented the citizens of part of Chesterfield County and the Counties of Prince George, Surry, and Sussex and the Cities of Colonial Heights, Hopewell, and Petersburg; and

WHEREAS, during his two decades of service in the Senate of Virginia, Elmon Taylor Gray, widely respected by colleagues of both parties, served with great passion and energy as a member of the Senate Committees on Commerce and Labor, Education and Health, Finance, Transportation, and Rules; and

WHEREAS, mindful of the importance of education to his own success, Elmon Taylor Gray championed many groundbreaking improvements in higher education through his vision and leadership while serving as the longtime chairman of the Senate Committee on Education and Health; and

WHEREAS, a highly regarded business leader, Elmon Taylor Gray 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 from the Senate in 1992, he worked with 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, Elmon Taylor Gray was a generous philanthropist and stalwart supporter of VMI, raising millions for the school's endowment and supporting its longstanding educational mission; he served as president of the Board of Visitors from 1964 to 1966, as 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, 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 & 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; and

WHEREAS, his faithful devotion to Southside Virginia and genuine spirit of community service earned Elmon Taylor Gray many accolades, awards, and recognition during his lifetime, among them the Virginia Military Institute Foundation Distinguished Service Award in 1977; the New Market Medal in 1980—VMI'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, Elmon Taylor Gray took particular pride in the creation of the Appomattox Regional

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56 Governor's School for the Arts and Technology in Petersburg, which continues to prepare talented and
57 skilled young thinkers and artists from the Southside area for advanced study; and

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

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

62 WHEREAS, predeceased by his wife of 62 years, Pamela, Elmon Taylor Gray will be fondly
63 remembered and greatly missed by his children, Katharine, Garland, and Bruce, and their families; his
64 colleagues on both sides of the aisle; and the citizens of the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

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

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