

2013 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 119

Commending William Lee Owen.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, January 10, 2013

WHEREAS, William Lee Owen, Senior Committee Clerk in the House Committee Operations Office, retired on December 31, 2012, thus ending an outstanding career of service to the nation, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the House of Delegates; and

WHEREAS, William "Bill" Owen was born in Danville on March 8, 1921, and attended public school in Critz in Patrick County before graduating from Thomas Jefferson High School in Richmond; and

WHEREAS, Bill Owen subsequently attended the University of Richmond and Drury College in Springfield, Missouri; and

WHEREAS, in 1942 Bill Owen began an illustrious career in public service by volunteering to serve his country in the United States Coast Guard during World War II before ending up in the Naval Air Corps and attending pre-flight training at Anacostia Naval Air Station; and

WHEREAS, the United States Navy at the time would not let aviators get married, so Bill Owen left the navy, married the love of his life, Christina McDowell, and re-entered the service as a member of the Army Air Corps a week later; and

WHEREAS, Bill Owen was not assigned overseas during World War II; he nevertheless contributed to the war effort by serving as an instructor pilot, teaching others the skills necessary for success in the skies over Europe and the Pacific; and

WHEREAS, at the conclusion of the war, in 1946, Bill Owen joined the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) as an engineer, beginning 66 years of continuous meritorious service to his beloved Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, during his tenure with VDOT, Bill Owen worked in the Salem, Suffolk, and Richmond districts with postings in Halifax, Newport News, Williamsburg, Salem, and Richmond; and

WHEREAS, Bill Owen contributed his skills and talents to the work on the George P. Coleman Memorial Bridge and Route 17 approaches, to the moving of the ferry slip from Jamestown Island to Glass House Point, to the construction of Interstate 64 from the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel to Williamsburg, and to numerous projects on Jamestown Island related to both the construction of the fort and park and to events associated with the 350th anniversary celebration; and

WHEREAS, at a time when VDOT employed only one full-time pilot, Bill Owen contributed not only his engineering skills, but his aviation skills as a part-time pilot with the department, including flying five life-saving organ donations (three hearts and two kidneys); and

WHEREAS, by the time he retired in 1986 as the state's chief pilot, Bill Owen had personally flown Governors James Lindsay Almond, Jr.; Albertis S. Harrison, Jr.; Mills E. Godwin, Jr.; A. Linwood Holton, Jr.; John N. Dalton; Charles S. Robb; Gerald L. Baliles; and L. Douglas Wilder (the latter while still Lieutenant Governor); and

WHEREAS, as it was common during this period for governors to go home on weekends and not stay in Richmond, Bill Owen would frequently fly governors and members of the legislature home on weekends, and often took off from Byrd Field, now Richmond International Airport, at 4 a.m. on Mondays to pick up the governor and have him back at the Capitol by 7:30 a.m. to begin the work week; and

WHEREAS, Bill Owen began working for the House Clerk's Office as a Committee Clerk during the 1987 session, clerking three standing committees—the House Committees on Health, Welfare and Institutions; Labor and Commerce; and Militia and Police—during his first session; and during his tenure, Bill Owen would also serve as Clerk to the House Committees on Claims; Corporations, Insurance and Banking; Finance; and Science and Technology; and

WHEREAS, for 25 sessions of the General Assembly, Bill Owen provided outstanding service and support to all the members of the House of Delegates, but most especially to the members of his committees and his committee chairs, David G. Brickley, Kathy J. Byron, C. Richard Cranwell, Frederick H. Creekmore, Jay W. DeBoer, J. Samuel Glasscock, Harry J. Parrish, Harry R. Purkey, and Clifton A. Woodrum; and

WHEREAS, in addition to providing exemplary support to the many standing committees of the House of Delegates, Bill Owen also lent his innumerable skills to interim study committees including the landmark study on mental health, mental retardation, and substance abuse co-chaired by former State Senator Joseph V. Gartlan, Jr., and former Delegate Franklin P. Hall, and most recently the uranium mining subcommittee of the Coal and Energy Commission; and

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WHEREAS, Bill Owen served under House Clerks Joseph H. Holloman, Jr., Bruce F. Jamerson, and G. Paul Nardo; and under Speakers A.L. Philpott, Thomas W. Moss, Jr., S. Vance Wilkins, Jr., William J. Howell, and Acting Speaker Lacey E. Putney; and

WHEREAS, throughout his 70 years of service to the United States of America and the Commonwealth of Virginia, the last 25 years with the House of Delegates, Bill Owen established an enviable record of achievement, characterized by efficiency, effectiveness, devotion to duty, and commitment to the finest ideals of selfless public service; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That William Lee Owen hereby be commended on his meritorious and exceptional service to the House of Delegates, the General Assembly, and the citizens of the Commonwealth; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to William Lee Owen as an expression of the House of Delegates' gratitude for his more than 70 years of contributions to the Commonwealth of Virginia and the nation and best wishes for a long and fulfilling retirement.