

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 276

Commending the Virginia State University Gospel Chorale.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 5, 2014

Agreed to by the Senate, February 6, 2014

WHEREAS, the Virginia State University Gospel Chorale was founded in 1971 by Ms. Jackie Ruffin, formerly of the Richard Smallwood Singers, and Mr. Larry Bland, as the Larry Bland Gospel Ensemble; the Ensemble's name was changed to the Virginia State College Gospel Choir and later to the Virginia State University Gospel Chorale; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia State University Gospel Chorale recorded its first album, *Everyday with Jesus*, in 1977 and its second album, *He's Able*, in 1978; the choir's third album, *Virginia State University Gospel Chorale: Live in Concert*, was recorded in 2003; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia State University Gospel Chorale first performed before a broader audience by competing in the National Black Music Caucus Gospel Competition, where the choir won first place in 1984, 1985, 1988, 1996, 2003, and 2006, and second place in 1987; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia State University Gospel Chorale has toured nationally and internationally, performing on each international tour at the Pope's Vatican Christmas Concert, most recently in 2013; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia State University Gospel Chorale has performed on the same stage with renowned gospel recording artists Cheryl "Coko" Clemons of R&B group SWV, Mary Mary, Tye Tribbett, Earnest Pugh, Hezekiah Walker, JJ Hairston and Youthful Praise, and with poet Nikki Giovanni; and

WHEREAS, in September 2012, the Virginia State University Gospel Chorale competed in "How Sweet the Sound," a choral competition sponsored by Verizon, and out of the thousands of video entries submitted, the Chorale was one of 42 choirs and only one of four college choirs to reach the regional competitions around the country; the Chorale won the 2012 District of Columbia Region's People's Choice Award and garnered local, regional, and national acclaim; and

WHEREAS, in January 2013, the Virginia State University Gospel Chorale was selected to perform at the Washington, D.C., Citywide Interfaith Food Drive, one of the events of President Barack Obama's National Day of Service and a part of the official Presidential Inauguration Activities; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia State University Gospel Chorale was an electrifying quarter-finalist in Season 8 (2013) of *America's Got Talent*, which provided national and international exposure for the Chorale and the university; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia State University Gospel Chorale is currently listed under the word "choir" in the Britannica Online Encyclopedia and is cited in the gospel music sections of two music appreciation textbooks; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia State University Gospel Chorale performed as part of the 2014 inaugural activities for Governor Terence R. McAuliffe; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia State University Gospel Chorale, under the dedicated leadership of Director Perry Evans II, faculty adviser James Holden, Jr., business manager Michael Rainey, and musical director Mark Johnson, currently comprises approximately 100 hardworking choir members and five musicians, with various racial, national, and geographical backgrounds; and

WHEREAS, this world-renowned musical group continues to bring joy and enrich the lives of Virginians and citizens around the world through the expression of its unique and indescribable musical gifts and talents; and

WHEREAS, Virginia takes pride in the accomplishments of the Virginia State University Gospel Chorale; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend the Virginia State University Gospel Chorale; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare copies of this resolution for presentation to Dr. Keith T. Miller, president of Virginia State University, and Perry Evans II, Virginia State University Gospel Chorale director, as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration and gratitude for the Chorale's commitment to inspire and enrich the quality of life of the people of the Commonwealth and the world.

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