

14105195D

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 161

Offered February 24, 2014

Celebrating the life of the Honorable Harry F. Byrd, Jr.

Patrons—Vogel; Delegates: LaRock and Minchew

WHEREAS, the Honorable Harry F. Byrd, Jr., a respected statesman and great Virginian who dedicated the majority of his life to service to the Commonwealth and made history as an independent in the United States Senate, died on July 30, 2013; and

WHEREAS, a native of Winchester, Harry Byrd attended Virginia Military Institute and the University of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, joining many of the other young men of his generation in service to his country, Harry Byrd was commissioned in the United States Navy Reserve on December 6, 1941, the day before the attack on Pearl Harbor; and

WHEREAS, during his honorable military service, Harry Byrd rose to the rank of lieutenant commander and served as the executive officer of a patrol bombing squadron in the Pacific Theater of the war; and

WHEREAS, Harry Byrd began working at the *Winchester Evening Star* in 1935, and the newspaper business would become one of the great passions of his life; he rose to the position of editor and remained involved in the paper for much of his life; and

WHEREAS, Harry Byrd served as publisher of the Harrisonburg *Daily News-Record* from 1936 to 1941 and from 1946 to 1981; he also served on the newspaper's board of directors until his death; and

WHEREAS, Harry Byrd served as the vice president of the Associated Press, traveling around the world for high-profile interviews with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Spanish dictator Francisco Franco; and

WHEREAS, desirous to be of service to the Commonwealth, Harry Byrd was elected to the Senate of Virginia in 1947, where he served for the next 18 years; he worked to enact important legislation and dedicated himself to the creation of responsible state budgets; and

WHEREAS, in 1965, Harry Byrd was nominated for and won a special election to fill the vacancy in the United States Senate left by his father's retirement; and

WHEREAS, making history in 1970, Harry Byrd broke from his party and became the first United States Senator to win a majority vote as an independent while facing challenges from both major parties; he was the Commonwealth's first independent statewide office holder; and

WHEREAS, after winning a third term in 1976, Harry Byrd became the first senator elected and reelected as an independent; his successes inspired many other officials to similarly hold to their ideals and run as independents; and

WHEREAS, a firm believer in smaller and more efficient government, Harry Byrd championed a balanced federal budget; he returned thousands of dollars in expense money and declined several pay increases; and

WHEREAS, while introducing only a select number of bills over the course of his career, Harry Byrd was a diligent elected official, casting over 6,000 votes and answering 96 percent of Senate roll calls; and

WHEREAS, Harry Byrd offered his wise and deliberate counsel to several Senate committees, including Finance and Armed Services, until his retirement in 1983; after devoting nearly two-thirds of his life to public service, he left a legacy few could match; and

WHEREAS, widely hailed for his unswerving commitment to the Commonwealth's and the nation's fiscal and economic well-being, Senator Byrd is remembered for his integrity and gentlemanly demeanor; he served the Commonwealth and the nation with great dignity and distinction; and

WHEREAS, predeceased by his wife of 48 years, Gretchen, Harry Byrd will be greatly missed and fondly remembered by his children, Harry III, Thomas, and Beverley, and their families; numerous other family members and friends; and colleagues on both sides of the aisle; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of an iconic Virginia statesman and a true Southern gentleman, the Honorable Harry F. Byrd, Jr.; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of the Honorable Harry F. Byrd, Jr., as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

INTRODUCED

SJ161