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## SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 209

Offered March 3, 2014

*Celebrating the life of the Honorable Benjamin Joseph Lambert, III.*

Patrons—McEachin, Alexander, Barker, Black, Carrico, Colgan, Cosgrove, Deeds, Ebbin, Edwards, Favola, Garrett, Hanger, Howell, Lewis, Locke, Lucas, Marsden, Marsh, Martin, McDougle, McWaters, Miller, Newman, Norment, Obenshain, Petersen, Puckett, Puller, Reeves, Ruff, Saslaw, Smith, Stanley, Stosch, Stuart, Vogel, Wagner, Watkins and Wexton; Delegates: Byron, Cole and Landes

WHEREAS, the Honorable Benjamin Joseph Lambert, III, former state Senator of the 9th Senatorial District, comprising the City of Richmond and the Counties of Henrico and Charles City, was born on January 29, 1937, in Henrico County to prominent African American caterers, whose family lived in the Richmond area since the American Civil War; nurtured by loving parents, he was one of seven college-educated siblings whose success in their respective professions was recognized in Richmond and beyond; and

WHEREAS, the Honorable Benjamin Joseph Lambert, III, was a member of a family who taught three successive generations to value hard work and aspire to lofty goals, and whose trademark was tenacity, devotion to family, and graciousness; and

WHEREAS, the Honorable Benjamin Joseph Lambert, III, graduated from Virginia Randolph High School in 1955, earned his bachelor's degree in mathematics from Virginia Union University in 1959, where he was class president, a member of the yearbook staff, the Math Club, band, Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges, the Panhellenic Council, and Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated; he was an optometrist by profession, having graduated from the Massachusetts College of Optometry, and he attended the Pennsylvania College of Optometry; and

WHEREAS, the Honorable Benjamin Joseph Lambert, III, always actively involved in the community, began his 30-year political career with election to the Virginia House of Delegates in 1977 to represent the 33rd House District, and in 1985, he was elected overwhelmingly to the Senate of Virginia to represent the 9th Senatorial District; and

WHEREAS, a true statesman and scholar, the Honorable Benjamin Joseph Lambert, III, was a kind and caring Virginia gentleman; he practiced optometry in the Jackson Ward area of Richmond and moved effortlessly among the politically powerful, corporate leaders, civil rights activists, the health care community, and everyday constituents; and

WHEREAS, the Honorable Benjamin Joseph Lambert, III, who was the first African American appointed to the powerful Senate Committee on Finance, served on a number of legislative and executive branch and civic committees, chaired several subcommittees, was the chief patron of legislation creating the Virginia Commonwealth University Health System Authority, was the Senate patron of legislation creating the *Brown v. Board of Education* Scholarship Committee, which he chaired from its inception in 2004 until his retirement in 2007, and introduced measures designed to improve public and higher education, provide for lead abatement, and enhance the quality of life for underserved populations; and

WHEREAS, the Honorable Benjamin Joseph Lambert, III, was a dedicated public servant as demonstrated by his numerous affiliations, memberships, and awards; in 1972, he received the "Outstanding Young Man" award from the Richmond Jaycees, the first African American man to receive the honor, which the civic group had given since 1938; in 1980, he became the first African American to represent Virginia on the Democratic National Committee; in 1993, he received the Humanitarian Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews, now the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities; in 2008, he was honored for his contributions as a Virginia Commonwealth University Health System board member and for being a champion of health care for underserved persons; and

WHEREAS, among the several organizations to which the Honorable Benjamin Joseph Lambert, III, devoted his time, talent, and treasure are the NAACP, Richmond Crusade for Voters, Jackson Ward Civic Association, Richmond Jaycees, North Richmond YMCA, Consolidated Bank and Trust, Dominion Resources, Inc. board of directors from 1994 to 2010, Dominion Virginia Power board of directors from 1992 to 1999, USA Education, Inc., Virginia College Fund, Virginia Randolph Foundation, Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia, Barksdale Theater, Virginia Optometric Association, American Optometric Association, National Optometric Association, and Richmond Medical Society; he served as secretary of the board of trustees of his alma mater, Virginia Union University, and was a longtime and devoted member of Westwood Baptist Church in Richmond; and

WHEREAS, the Honorable Benjamin Joseph Lambert, III, was a strong advocate for the City of

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55 Richmond and its surrounding communities; he was an influential and effective legislator who was  
56 trustworthy, dependable, and conscientious; and his keen understanding of the role of government and  
57 politics gave him a savvy ability to work effectively with members across the aisle to garner support for  
58 his legislation to ensure the welfare of his constituents, regardless of the political consequences; and

59 WHEREAS, the Honorable Benjamin Joseph Lambert, III, leaves a legacy of public service  
60 characterized by honesty, loyalty, diligence, duty, dignity, and grace, and "his works do follow him";  
61 and

62 WHEREAS, his warm, easy smile, jovial nature, generosity, kindness towards his patients and others,  
63 and hearty laugh will be sorely missed by his family, friends, colleagues, church family, and everyone  
64 whose life he touched, and loving memories of the Honorable Benjamin Joseph Lambert, III, will be  
65 cherished forever; now, therefore, be it

66 RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby  
67 note with great sadness the loss of the Honorable Benjamin Joseph Lambert, III, former state Senator of  
68 the 9th Senatorial District; and, be it

69 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for  
70 presentation to the family of the Honorable Benjamin Joseph Lambert, III, former state Senator of the  
71 9th Senatorial District, as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory and fond  
72 remembrance and admiration of his life of public service to the Commonwealth.