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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 5234

Offered September 17, 2014

*Celebrating the life of Matthew James Robinson, Jr.*

Patron—McQuinn

WHEREAS, Matthew James Robinson, Jr., a proud veteran, successful businessman, and pillar of the Richmond community, died on September 6, 2014, at the age of 94; and

WHEREAS, Matthew James Robinson, Jr., affectionately known as "Duchie," was born on February 20, 1920, in Henrico County, where he was nurtured in a loving and Christian home; and

WHEREAS, in 1941, Matthew James Robinson, Jr., enlisted in the Army Air Corps and was stationed at Maxwell Field, Alabama, where he was promoted to the rank of sergeant; he was later transferred to India and Burma, where he served for three years; in 1942, he became Master Sergeant of the 32nd Aviation Squadron, which was the highest rank held by an African American at that time; and

WHEREAS, after serving his country honorably and with distinction, Matthew James Robinson, Jr., returned to civilian life and joined his father in the family business, the Imperial Broom Company, Inc., which manufactured natural fiber brooms for five generations, beginning with his great-grandfather, "Papa George," a free Black man, who made and sold brooms around the turn of the 20th century; and

WHEREAS, quickly learning the family business, Matthew James Robinson, Jr., became president, assumed management of the family business, and expanded it to sell janitorial supplies and African Wedding brooms, a popular item that caught the eye of Martha Stewart, who included it in one of her wedding magazines; he was also a consultant in broom making for Busch Gardens in Williamsburg; and

WHEREAS, Matthew James Robinson, Jr., having been inspired by his father to enter the field of real estate, attended the Washington Real Estate and Insurance School; in May 1956, he received the Real Estate Broker Certificate, and later he collaborated with his father in another successful business venture, the Matthew J. Robinson Real Estate Company; and

WHEREAS, Matthew James Robinson, Jr., became actively involved in community and political activities as a young adult; he was a committed member of the East End Masonic Lodge No. 233, Metropolitan Business League, Henrico County Democratic Committee, and, for 12 years, the Henrico County Economic Development Authority; trustee emeritus of the Board of Trustees of the Virginia Randolph Foundation; president of the Bungalow City Civic Association for many years, recognized as honorary "Mayor of Bungalow City" by his neighbors; and in 2008, he was honored by Grayland Baptist Church as a "Living Legend" during Black History Month; and

WHEREAS, during his formative years, Matthew James Robinson, Jr., united with New Bridge Baptist Church, which his maternal grandparents helped found and organize 149 years ago in eastern Henrico County; practicing his faith was very important to him and, like his parents and grandparents before him, he was a devoted and active member of the church, giving of his time, talent, and resources to serve God and His people in many ministries, including as deacon, trustee, superintendent of Sunday school, member of the Finance Committee, Sunday school teacher, member of the Pastoral Search Committee and the New Bridge Baptist Church Child Care Center board of directors, Scout Master of Troop 400 for 10 years; and past president of the Varina and Fairfield Sunday School Unions and Sons and Daughters of Esther; he remained an active and dedicated member of many of these ministries until his death; and

WHEREAS, Matthew James Robinson, Jr., "Duchie," the anchor of his family, was deeply loved as a proud Christian husband, father, grandfather, churchman, friend, businessman, and community leader, and his family and many friends will sorely miss him and forever cherish his memory; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of Matthew James Robinson, Jr.; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Matthew James Robinson, Jr., as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.