

2014 SPECIAL SESSION I

ENROLLED

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 518

Commending James Marshall Whitaker.

Agreed to by the Senate, September 18, 2014

WHEREAS, in 2014, James Marshall Whitaker, a distinguished spiritual and community leader who has devoted his life to serving and supporting others, celebrates 50 years as pastor of New Bethel Baptist Church in Portsmouth; and

WHEREAS, a native of North Carolina, James Whitaker was raised in Norfolk and graduated from the historic Booker T. Washington High School; he earned bachelor's and master's degrees from Virginia Union University and a master's degree from New York University; and

WHEREAS, James Whitaker answered his calling to serve and uplift others from a young age; while still a student at Virginia Union University, he served as a counselor and Bible studies teacher at Virginia State Penitentiary and became pastor of Mount Vernon Baptist Church in White Stone; and

WHEREAS, James Whitaker served members of the community with the Washington, D.C., Department of Corrections; Washington, D.C., General Hospital; Laurel Regional Hospital; and St. Elizabeths Hospital before joining New Bethel Baptist Church as pastor in 1964; and

WHEREAS, under James Whitaker's able leadership and guidance, New Bethel Baptist Church has experienced steady growth and has undergone numerous enhancements to better serve the congregation; the church completed a new sanctuary in 1981 and an administration building in 1994 and renovated the old sanctuary in 1997; and

WHEREAS, James Whitaker ensured a strong future for New Bethel Baptist Church by revitalizing and shepherding the Gideon Ministry and the Endowment Fund Ministry, which allowed the church to complete a new parking lot and modernize other facilities; and

WHEREAS, an active leader throughout the community, James Whitaker bravely participated in the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s and 1970 and generously volunteers his time and talents as a member of numerous civic and service organizations; and

WHEREAS, a devoted family man, James Whitaker and his wife of 52 years, Otelia—who celebrates 50 years as the first lady of New Bethel Baptist Church in 2014—have proudly raised four children and nine grandchildren; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate of Virginia, That James Marshall Whitaker hereby be commended for 50 years of spiritual leadership of the congregation of New Bethel Baptist Church; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to James Marshall Whitaker as an expression of the Senate of Virginia's admiration for his countless contributions to the Portsmouth community and the Commonwealth.

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