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HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 183

Offered March 2, 2016

Commending the Honorable John C. Watkins.

Patrons—Ware, Ingram, Massie and Toscano

WHEREAS, the founders of the American Republic, the principal of whom were sons of Virginia, understood, owing to their survey of the annals of history, that the individual grounded in the self-governing life of family, farm, community, and county is the citizen most capable of participating in the government of a sovereign state; and

WHEREAS, the agrarian counties of Virginia have for centuries cultivated citizens who have arisen to embody the singular qualities of the Virginian statesman in the government of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, election to public office by the citizens of one's own community is at once a sacred trust and the summons to serve on behalf of the highest good of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, repeated reelection to public office by one's fellow citizens is as indicative of the officeholder's faithful practice of civic virtues as it is a rare accomplishment anywhere in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the Honorable John C. Watkins recently retired from the Senate of Virginia to which he was first elected in 1998 to represent citizens of the 10th Senatorial District, which consists of all of Powhatan County and parts of Chesterfield County and the City of Richmond, and including, too, neighborhoods in which his roots run so deep and have been honored for so long that they bear the very name of his family; and

WHEREAS, before standing for election to the Senate, John Watkins was elected to eight two-year terms in the Virginia House of Delegates for a seat also representing the citizens of both Powhatan and Chesterfield Counties; and

WHEREAS, his more than three decades of elected office in the General Assembly rank John Watkins among the longest-serving legislators of any jurisdiction in the history of the Commonwealth of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, among the numerous accomplishments to which John Watkins himself draws especial attention are his introduction of some of the first legislation to establish the Virginia Geographic Information Network; reform of the Virginia Retirement System; improvement of the quality of water, particularly with regard to state funding for municipal wastewater treatment plants and, separately, legislation to establish a nutrient trading system for improvement of the quality of water in Virginia's rivers and Chesapeake Bay; creation of the Virginia-North Carolina High Speed Rail Compact; a proposed plan for transportation improvements, without tax increases, that persuaded other leaders to produce an alternative proposal; authorship of legislation for farm wineries and farm breweries and funding for the marketing of wines produced in Virginia; enactment of the first Digital Identity Law among all the States of the Union; legislation to authorize Transportation Network companies; legislation to remove the prohibition on uranium mining in the Commonwealth; and numerous bills advancing economic development and enterprise zones and improving services for the unemployed; and

WHEREAS, upon his retirement at the conclusion of 2015, John Watkins was chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce and Labor and a ranking member of the chamber's Committees on Finance, Rules, Transportation, and Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources; and

WHEREAS, John Watkins served, too, on numerous of the legislature's important commissions, including Coal and Energy, Electric Utility Regulation, Federal Action Contingency Trust Fund Approval, Health Insurance Reform, High Speed Rail Compact, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, Joint Legislative Audit and Review, Public-Private Partnership, Revenue Estimates, Secure Commonwealth Panel, Technology and Science, Unemployment, and Housing, as well as the Southern States Energy Board; and

WHEREAS, the legislative record does not register the countless other endeavors on behalf of his constituents that characterized every day of the legislative service undertaken by John Watkins; and

WHEREAS, John Watkins was born in Petersburg on March 1, 1947, and earned the bachelor of science degree in horticulture from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University; and

WHEREAS, John Watkins has long worked professionally as manager of Watkins Land, LLC, and has for decades been associated with Watkins Nursery, the family firm founded in 1876 by John Benjamin Watkins and his brother, and a firm that was one of the first in the nation to specialize in the mail-order supply of fruit trees, and a family enterprise that helped replant the South after the ravages of the War Between the States; and

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59 WHEREAS, John Watkins and his wife, Kathryn Ann (née Clawson), are members of Christ the
60 King Lutheran Church; and

61 WHEREAS, many thousands of John Watkins' former constituents and no doubt all of his former
62 colleagues in the General Assembly wish long years of good health and well-being to a now-retired
63 legislator who hewed to his convictions and whose counsel was sought—and more often than not
64 heeded—by two generations of the elected leaders of Virginia; now, therefore, be it

65 RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That the Honorable John C. Watkins hereby be commended
66 for his long and distinguished service to the people of Powhatan, Chesterfield, and the City of
67 Richmond, and, indeed, to all the people of Virginia; and, be it

68 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution
69 for presentation to the Honorable John C. Watkins, former Member of the Virginia House of Delegates,
70 and former Member of the Senate of Virginia, and forever deserving of the sobriquet long ascribed to
71 him by his fellow legislators of Virginia—The Gentleman from Powhatan.