

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 30

Commemorating the life and legacy of Russell Amos Kirk.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, January 26, 2018

WHEREAS, though *to change* has become the mantra that accompanies the recent domination of individual and social life by the engines of economy and technology, *to conserve* a traditional social order was the summons of Russell Amos Kirk; and

WHEREAS, as the United States emerged from the Second World War as a dynamo of economic and material expansion, literary critic Lionel Trilling could declare, in 1950, "Liberalism is not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition" of the American people; and

WHEREAS, Russell Kirk challenged the assertion of Liberalism's hegemony by publishing, in 1952, a work, *The Conservative Mind*, that would transform for generations to come the political discourse of the nation; and

WHEREAS, to Russell Kirk, the conservative tradition first enunciated in the modern era by Edmund Burke, and sustained by generations of American statesmen—including the redoubtable John Randolph of Virginia—holds that the reformist zeal of Liberalism "thinks of politics as a revolutionary instrument for transforming society and even transforming human nature . . . but men cannot improve a society by setting fire to it"; and

WHEREAS, Russell Kirk drew upon the wisdom of the past to posit, too, that "[t]he twentieth-century conservative is concerned, first of all, for the regeneration of the spirit and character—with the perennial problem of the inner order of the soul, the restoration of the ethical understanding, and the religious sanction upon which any life worth living is founded. This is conservatism at its highest"; and

WHEREAS, Russell Kirk was born in Plymouth, Michigan, in 1918, earned a bachelor's degree from Michigan State University and a master's degree—with his study of John Randolph—from Duke University, served in the United States Army in World War II, and returned to his studies to become the first and only American to be awarded the degree of Doctor of Letters by St. Andrews University in Scotland; and

WHEREAS, Russell Kirk expanded upon his central theses in a distinguished series of works that included *The Roots of American Order*, *The American Cause*, *The Political Principles of Robert A. Taft* (with James McClellan), and *The Politics of Prudence*; and

WHEREAS, Russell Kirk wrote, too, masterful ghost and horror stories, such as *Watchers at the Strait Gate*, and magisterial literary criticism, for example, *Eliot and His Age: T. S. Eliot's Moral Imagination in the Twentieth Century*, and countless newspaper columns and essays in leading journals on both sides of the Atlantic; and

WHEREAS, for these and many other of his accomplishments, Russell Kirk was presented with the Presidential Citizens Medal by President Ronald Reagan in 1989; and

WHEREAS, Russell Kirk lived most of his adult life in his ancestral home, Piety Hill, in tiny and remote Mecosta, Michigan, where he and his wife, Annette Kirk née Courtemanche, raised four daughters and where, still today, Annette Kirk welcomes students and scholars from across the world to individual study or seminars sponsored by the Russell Kirk Center for Cultural Renewal; and

WHEREAS, Russell Kirk, who died on April 29, 1994, established himself as a wise and virtuous man whose exemplary life and scholarly works are an enduring legacy of the American people, be they liberal or conservative; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the House of Delegates hereby commemorate the life and legacy of Russell Amos Kirk on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of his birth; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Annette Kirk and to Dan McCarthy, editor-at-large of *The American Conservative*, who will be guest speaker at a forum to be held in Richmond on March 1, 2018, by Virginian admirers of the late, great Russell Kirk.