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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 105

Offered January 31, 2018

*Celebrating the life of the Reverend Dr. Curtis West Harris.*

Patrons—Dance, Locke, Lucas, McClellan and Ruff; Delegates: Aird, Ingram, Bagby, Heretick, James, McQuinn, Rasoul and Tyler

WHEREAS, the Reverend Dr. Curtis West Harris, a respected religious leader, a dedicated public servant, and a champion for Civil Rights who made many contributions to the Hopewell community, died on December 10, 2017; and

WHEREAS, a native of Dendron, Curtis Harris grew up in Hopewell, where he attended public schools; he furthered his education at Virginia Union University, then pursued a career with Allied Chemical Corporation; and

WHEREAS, Curtis Harris learned the value of compassion and service to others at a young age, and he was guided by his mother's selfless example to answer the call to ministry; he was ordained in 1959 and served as the pastor of First Baptist Church Bermuda Hundred in Chester for 10 years; and

WHEREAS, Curtis Harris later served as pastor of Gilfield Baptist Church in Ivor for 33 years; he retired as pastor of Union Baptist Church in Hopewell, and he was named pastor emeritus after providing close to a half-century of wise spiritual leadership; and

WHEREAS, Curtis Harris began a long association with the Civil Rights movement when he was elected as president of the Hopewell chapter of the NAACP; he attended the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom and participated in the Selma to Montgomery marches to secure voting rights for African Americans, as well as sit-ins and other peaceful protests; and

WHEREAS, in the 1960s, Curtis Harris also developed an interest in government, and he went on to be elected as the second African American member of the Hopewell City Council; he was sworn in as the city's first African American mayor in 1998 and retired from public office in 2012, after 26 years of exceptional service; and

WHEREAS, Curtis Harris also volunteered his time and wise leadership to many civic and service organizations, including the Hopewell Ministerial Association, the Hopewell Improvement Association, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the Virginia Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights; and

WHEREAS, predeceased by his loving wife of 65 years, Ruth, Curtis Harris will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his children, Curtis, Jr., Kenneth, Michael, Joanne, Karen, and Michelle, and their families and numerous other family members and friends; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of the Reverend Dr. Curtis West Harris, a religious leader who devoted his life to the community and the cause of equal rights; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of the Reverend Dr. Curtis West Harris as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

INTRODUCED

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