

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 1023

Commending Robert J. Austin.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 21, 2019
Agreed to by the Senate, February 23, 2019

WHEREAS, on October 31, 2018, Robert J. Austin retired as section manager of the Education, Health, Welfare, Elections, Rules, and Special Projects Section of the Division of Legislative Services after 51 years of exceptional service to the General Assembly and the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, a native of Roanoke, Robert J. "Jack" Austin is a proud alumnus of the University of Virginia, where he earned a bachelor's degree in foreign affairs, a master's degree in government, and a doctoral degree in philosophy of government; and

WHEREAS, while studying at the University of Virginia's Institute of Government, Jack Austin compiled data for annual studies on highway finance and tax rates in the Commonwealth and served as a consultant for the Norfolk Charter Advisory Study Commission; he also served as a legislative assistant to the Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates, the Honorable John Warren Cooke, and provided staff assistance to the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections during the decennial redistricting in 1971; and

WHEREAS, in 1972, Jack Austin joined Virginia Commonwealth University as an assistant professor, teaching courses in local, state, and federal government; he served on the planning committee that developed the Department of Political Science and the university's bachelor's degree program in political science; and

WHEREAS, during his time at Virginia Commonwealth University, Jack Austin worked as an academic advisor, internship program coordinator, and departmental liaison; he hosted seminars for local elected officials, coordinated faculty training on state government, and was the principal author of a legislative liaison handbook for the Virginia Chapter of the American Association of University Professors; and

WHEREAS, Jack Austin supported efforts to redesignate the General Assembly's Division of Statutory Research and Drafting and subsequently joined the new Division of Legislative Services, where he provided exceptional bill drafting, committee staffing, legal analysis and interpretation, and constituent services on behalf of the members of the Virginia General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, as a section manager, Jack Austin oversaw a large staff of attorneys, editors, and administrative assistants who were responsible for an array of subject matter, including education, health, social services, editing, elections, redistricting, geographic information systems, publications, and resolutions; and

WHEREAS, in nearly 40 years with the Division of Legislative Services, Jack Austin reviewed tens of thousands of bills and resolutions, turning his practiced eye from the intricacies of health care policy one moment to the minutia of high school sports statistics the next; and

WHEREAS, Jack Austin garnered the trust and respect of his staff for his attention to detail and his collegial leadership style; he was accessible as both a counselor and a teacher, and was admired for his insights and acumen, as well as his wit and composure under pressure; and

WHEREAS, among his many achievements in service to the residents of Virginia, Jack Austin oversaw four decennial redistricting processes in the Commonwealth as a member of reapportioning and redistricting committees; the chairmen, members, and staff of those committees relied heavily on him for his expert legal guidance; and

WHEREAS, in the course of his duties, Jack Austin developed not only a vast institutional knowledge of the workings of state government, but also a keen understanding of the people and places of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, Jack Austin's personal integrity, commitment to public service, and professional contributions helped ensure the good and efficient functioning of state government and enabled the General Assembly to better serve the residents of and visitors to the Commonwealth; his legacy of excellence lives on in the many young attorneys he mentored throughout his career; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Robert J. Austin for his more than five decades of meritorious contributions to the people of Virginia on the occasion of his retirement from the Division of Legislative Services in 2018; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Robert J. Austin as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for his wide-ranging expertise and gratitude for his dedicated service to the Commonwealth.

ENROLLED

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