

2019 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 830

Celebrating the life of Sylvia Overton McLaughlin.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 11, 2019
Agreed to by the Senate, February 14, 2019

WHEREAS, Sylvia Overton McLaughlin, esteemed newspaper editor of the *News & Record*, died December 24, 2018; and

WHEREAS, Sylvia McLaughlin learned the value of hard work growing up on her maternal grandparents' tobacco farm near Polecat Creek; she earned high marks and academic distinction at Halifax Elementary School and Halifax High School, going on to study at Longwood University and later at Mary Washington College, which at the time was a women's college affiliated with the University of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, it was in college that Sylvia McLaughlin married her high school sweetheart Tucker McLaughlin, graduating while rearing small children; the couple moved back to Halifax where they continued to raise their family while working in the real estate, land development, and oil industries; and

WHEREAS, in 1973, the couple bought the *Record-Advertiser* and the *South Boston News*, with Sylvia McLaughlin acting as company secretary, selling advertising, and keeping the books; the couple's goal was to preserve a voice to counter the dominant paper of the time, *The Gazette-Virginian*, resulting in two newspapers in the same town vying for the same audience as the community's newspaper of record, offering opposing views from young journalists on the pressing issues of the day, from school desegregation to a campaign to build a new Halifax County Senior High School; and

WHEREAS, the newspapers later merged and became the *News & Record*, which Sylvia McLaughlin led, becoming the editor when economic hardship forced her to take the reins as a one-person news operation, where she was known for fair reporting covering the area's civic, cultural, criminal, and environmental issues, and as a regular attendee at public meetings; and

WHEREAS, Sylvia McLaughlin was known as a champion of public education and a voice for fairness and inclusion in community life, especially for African American residents of the community who knew the sting of being excluded from local affairs; and

WHEREAS, for her principled reporting, in 2014, the Halifax County/South Boston NAACP bestowed on Sylvia McLaughlin the Cora Tucker Award, named for the late Halifax County civil rights activist; she earned the distinction of being the only white person to ever earn that award; and

WHEREAS, predeceased by her husband, Tucker, Sylvia McLaughlin will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by her four children, Tucker, Jr., Bill, Ann, and Tom, and their families, and numerous other family members and friends; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of Sylvia Overton McLaughlin, esteemed newspaper editor of the *News & Record*; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Sylvia Overton McLaughlin as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for her memory.

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