

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 873

Celebrating the life of the Honorable Ralph L. Axselle, Jr.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 18, 2019
 Agreed to by the Senate, February 23, 2019

WHEREAS, the Honorable Ralph L. Axselle, Jr., a prominent attorney in Richmond and a former member of the Virginia House of Delegates who represented the residents of Henrico County for 16 years, died on January 24, 2019; and

WHEREAS, Ralph L. "Bill" Axselle, Jr., grew up in Glen Allen and graduated from Hermitage High School, where he cultivated his penchant for leadership as class president for four years, then continued his education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; and

WHEREAS, Bill Axselle returned to the Commonwealth to pursue a law degree at the University of Richmond; he served as president of the McNeill Law Society and as a member of the University of Richmond *Law Review*, while supporting his young family by working as a railroad brakeman; and

WHEREAS, seeking to provide stronger representation for his fellow residents of Henrico County, Bill Axselle ran for and was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates in 1973 and quickly gained a reputation for his attention to detail, work ethic, and commitment to building bipartisan consensus; and

WHEREAS, during Bill Axselle's first term as a member of the General Assembly, 22 of his 28 introduced bills passed and he served on more study committees than any other freshman delegate; he was recognized as the most effective of 17 new members elected in 1973; and

WHEREAS, among his proudest achievements, Bill Axselle supported a 10-year moratorium on annexation attempts by the City of Richmond in 1977 and legislation in 1979 that gave the counties adjacent to the city immunity from annexation, ultimately fostering greater regional cooperation and more effective long-range planning; and

WHEREAS, Bill Axselle coordinated negotiations for road improvements near River Road Shopping Center; advocated for full disclosure of lobbyists' activities and spending; helped give the State Corporation Commission power to set utility rates in Richmond; modified the criminal code to allow juries to know the background of defendants before sentencing; limited increases in state spending to the rate of growth of the economy; and established a task force to make rape trials less intimidating for victims; and

WHEREAS, after leaving the state legislature in 1990, Bill Axselle continued to offer his leadership and expertise to several state boards and commissions, including the Virginia Code Commission and the Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council, among many others; most notably, he joined Williams Mullen, becoming chair of the firm's government relations group and using his expertise to develop one of the Commonwealth's premier government relations teams; and

WHEREAS, Bill Axselle was widely known as a real estate and land use attorney who had practiced in energy and infrastructure, business and corporate, and transportation and logistics law; and

WHEREAS, Bill Axselle was selected by *Best Lawyers* as its government relations Lawyer of the Year in 2011 and 2015 and its land use and zoning Lawyer of the Year in 2012, 2016, and 2018; he was named to *Virginia Lawyers Weekly's* 2014 class of Leaders in the Law, which recognizes lawyers for changing the law, serving the community, changing practice, or improving Virginia's justice system; and

WHEREAS, Bill Axselle will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his wife, Anne; his children, Ralph III, Anne-Marie, and Laura, and their families; and numerous other family members, friends, and colleagues on both sides of the aisle; 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 the Honorable Ralph L. Axselle, Jr., a highly admired public servant, an accomplished attorney, and a champion for Henrico County; 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 the Honorable Ralph L. Axselle, Jr., as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

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