

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 960

Commemorating the life and legacy of Thomas Calhoun Walker.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 18, 2019
 Agreed to by the Senate, February 21, 2019

WHEREAS, Thomas Calhoun Walker, a trailblazing attorney, educator, and public servant who dedicated his life to strengthening the Gloucester County community, died on November 5, 1953; and

WHEREAS, T.C. Walker, born a slave in 1862, worked to help support his family as a young man; he dreamed of pursuing an education and with 92 cents in his pocket, traveled to Hampton Institute where, despite failing the entrance exam, he convinced General Samuel Chapman Armstrong, the founder of the institution, to allow him to enroll in a work-study program; and

WHEREAS, after graduating from what is now Hampton University, T.C. Walker taught students at Zion Poplars Baptist Church in Gloucester, then began to further his education by studying law with the help of two local attorneys; when he passed the bar exam at the age of 25, he became the first African American attorney in Gloucester County; and

WHEREAS, T.C. Walker was a founding member of the Virginia State Board of Public Welfare and used his position on the State Board of Charities and Corrections to help find homes for more than 2,000 at-risk children in Gloucester County and other localities; and

WHEREAS, T.C. Walker encouraged members of the African American community to gain self-sufficiency by buying land and learning how to farm; he made loans and explained taxes to residents, and by 1930, 881 out of 995 African American families in Gloucester County owned their own farms, more than anywhere else in the United States; and

WHEREAS, T.C. Walker worked to lower the crime rate in Gloucester County by leading citizens' movements to close saloons and supporting similar movements in Lancaster County and Hanover County; and

WHEREAS, T.C. Walker remained committed to education throughout his life, organizing and raising funds for the Gloucester Agricultural and Industrial School and the Gloucester Training School; and

WHEREAS, in 1891, T.C. Walker was elected to the Gloucester County Board of Supervisors; he was later appointed as Virginia's first African American customs collector and became known as the "Black Governor of Virginia" when he was appointed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to the Virginia Emergency Relief Administration; and

WHEREAS, T.C. Walker was one of the leading citizens of his time and served as an example, then and now, to all Virginians of what can be achieved through hard work, determination, education, individual responsibility, and concern for the welfare of others; and

WHEREAS, upon his death, T.C. Walker bequeathed his home on Main Street in Gloucester Courthouse to Hampton University; the T.C. Walker House is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register and is a reminder of his lifelong efforts to serve and enhance the African American community; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commemorate the life and legacy of Thomas Calhoun Walker on the occasion of the 65th anniversary of his death in 1953; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Thomas C. Walker Preservation Alliance as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for his contributions to Gloucester County, Hampton University, and the Commonwealth.

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