

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 157

Commending Black women in the General Assembly.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 23, 2019

WHEREAS, the first meeting of the body that came to be known as the Virginia General Assembly took place in 1619, and 2019 marks the 400th anniversary of the first meeting of the Virginia legislature; and

WHEREAS, 2019 is also the 35th anniversary of Black women serving in the Virginia General Assembly, beginning with the Honorable Yvonne Bond Miller; and

WHEREAS, Yvonne Miller was born on July 4, 1934, in Edenton, North Carolina, the eldest child of 13 born to John and Pency Bond; and

WHEREAS, Yvonne Miller was raised in Norfolk after her family moved to the city and attended local segregated public schools; and

WHEREAS, Yvonne Miller continued her education at the historically Black college Norfolk Division of Virginia State College (now known as Norfolk State University) for two years; and then attended the historically Black college Virginia State College (now known as Virginia State University), graduating with her bachelor's degree in 1956; and

WHEREAS, Yvonne Miller began her career as a teacher in the segregated Norfolk Public Schools; witnessing the effects of Massive Resistance sparked her interest in the Civil Rights Movement and equal treatment; and

WHEREAS, Yvonne Miller earned a master's degree at Teachers College, Columbia University in 1962 and a doctorate in education from the University of Pittsburgh in 1973; she subsequently joined the education faculty at Norfolk State, becoming a professor and head of the Department of Early Childhood/Elementary Education; and

WHEREAS, desirous to be of further service to the community and the Commonwealth, Yvonne Miller ran for and was elected to the House of Delegates in 1983 and became the first Black woman to serve in the House of Delegates when she began her first term in 1984; and

WHEREAS, in 1988, Yvonne Miller began serving in the Senate of Virginia, also becoming the first Black woman to serve in the Senate; and

WHEREAS, during her tenure, Yvonne Miller was a steadfast champion for civil rights and education, fighting against the radiating effects of poverty; she stood up for voting rights, opposing the Voter ID law in 2012, which she compared to Jim Crow era efforts to suppress minority votes; and

WHEREAS, in 1996, Yvonne Miller became the first woman to chair a Senate committee when she became chair of the Transportation Committee; and

WHEREAS, as of 2012, Yvonne Miller was the longest-serving woman in the General Assembly, having served 28 years, and was ranked fourth in overall seniority; and

WHEREAS, Yvonne Miller died while in office on July 3, 2012; and

WHEREAS, Yvonne Miller set an example for those to come after her; since her trailblazing service began, 17 other Black women have served in both the House of Delegates and the Senate; and

WHEREAS, in the past 35 years, with their presence and diligent work, those 18 women were and continue to be voices for those whose voices have been diminished by systemic forces; they fight for equity and fairness and constantly call out injustice and work to find solutions to issues their communities face; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate of Virginia, That Black women in the General Assembly hereby be commended on the occasion of the 35th anniversary of the first Black woman legislator to serve in the General Assembly; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of the Honorable Yvonne Bond Miller and the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus as an expression of the Senate of Virginia's admiration for the distinguished service of Black women in the Virginia General Assembly.

ENROLLED

SR157ER