

2020 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 245

Commemorating the life and legacy of Leslie Devan Smith, Jr.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 24, 2020
Agreed to by the Senate, February 27, 2020

WHEREAS, Leslie Devan Smith, Jr., the first African American graduate of the Washington and Lee University School of Law, was honored in 2019 with a permanent exhibit at the institution that highlights his trailblazing accomplishments as a student and as attorney at the United States Department of Justice; and

WHEREAS, a native of Nansemond County, Leslie Smith earned a bachelor's degree from Saint Paul's College and chose to further his education by pursuing a law degree, believing that the legal profession provided the tools to build a more just world; and

WHEREAS, Leslie Smith excelled at the Washington and Lee University School of Law, where he was a member of the *Washington and Lee Law Review*, the Student Bar Association, and the Legal Research Association; and

WHEREAS, during his time at Washington and Lee University, Leslie Smith served as co-editor of the institution's law magazine *The Lawyer*, president of Delta Theta Pi, and treasurer of the Young Democrats Association; and

WHEREAS, Leslie Smith spent a summer working on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., becoming the first African American to work in a Virginia senator's office as a research aide to the Honorable William B. Spong, Jr., who later recommended him for a position at the firm Steptoe & Johnson the following summer; and

WHEREAS, after his graduation in 1969, Leslie Smith joined the United States Department of Justice and was assigned to the Civil Rights Division, where he worked to ensure compliance with court-ordered desegregation efforts in school districts in the South; and

WHEREAS, Leslie Smith was killed on June 9, 1971, and was laid to rest in his hometown of Chuckatuck, where his headstone proudly bears the one-word epitaph "Attorney"; and

WHEREAS, to honor Leslie Smith's accomplishments, Brant Hellwig, dean of the Washington and Lee University School of Law, worked with archivist John Jacob to design a permanent exhibit, which was fabricated by Gropen, Inc., and installed in the lobby of the Millhiser Moot Court Room in Sydney Lewis Hall in 2019; and

WHEREAS, the physical exhibit is accompanied by an online component containing photographs and other materials, allowing for a more thorough interpretation of Leslie Smith's life and achievements; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commemorate the life and legacy of Leslie Devan Smith, Jr., on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of his graduation from the Washington and Lee University School of Law; 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 Leslie Devan Smith, Jr., as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for his dedication to the pursuit of equal rights and inspirational contributions to the legal profession.

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