

2020 SESSION

ENROLLED

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 75

Celebrating the life of Ronald Lewis.

Agreed to by the Senate, March 8, 2020

WHEREAS, Ronald Lewis, a trailblazer for African American professional firefighters who diligently served the Richmond community as fire chief for more than 25 years, died on February 23, 2019; and

WHEREAS, Ronald Lewis was born in Philadelphia, where he began his career as a firefighter in 1956, and served the city until 1978, when he was selected to become fire chief for the City of Richmond after an extensive, nationwide search; and

WHEREAS, under Ronald Lewis's exceptional leadership, the City of Richmond reduced the number of fire deaths by 75 percent and increased efficiency of service by reorganizing the Richmond Department of Fire and Emergency Services and building 25 new stations and facilities; and

WHEREAS, Ronald Lewis implemented career development programs for Richmond firefighters, increased diversity in the department, and worked to ensure that firefighters had the best possible equipment and up-to-date training; and

WHEREAS, in addition to creating specialized hazardous materials and dive teams, Ronald Lewis also oversaw the implementation of sign language and braille programs to help Richmond firefighters better serve the members of the community in any situation; and

WHEREAS, Ronald Lewis established several community outreach efforts, including fire safety education for fifth grade students in Richmond Public Schools and smoke detector giveaways that distributed more than 7,000 smoke detectors to local residents in need; and

WHEREAS, as the first African American fire chief in Richmond history and a founding member of the International Association of Black Professional Firefighters, Ronald Lewis was an inspiration for generations of African American firefighters throughout the Commonwealth and the nation; and

WHEREAS, Ronald Lewis earned many awards and accolades for his exceptional service, including the Freedom Award from the Richmond Branch of the NAACP and recognition from the Virginia Department of Fire Programs; and

WHEREAS, Ronald Lewis will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his wife, Leslie; his children, Terri, Anita, Audrey, and Kenneth, and their families; and numerous other family members and friends; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate of Virginia hereby note with great sadness the loss of Ronald Lewis; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Ronald Lewis as an expression of the Senate of Virginia's respect for his memory.

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