

# 2020 SPECIAL SESSION I

INTRODUCED

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## SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 548

Offered September 24, 2020

*Commending Elaine R. Jones.*

Patrons—McClellan, Boysko, Deeds, Edwards, Hashmi, Locke, Lucas, Mason, Morrissey, Petersen, Spruill and Surovell

WHEREAS, Elaine R. Jones became the first African American woman to graduate from the University of Virginia School of Law in 1970 and went on to serve as a distinguished civil rights attorney; and

WHEREAS, a native of Norfolk, Elaine Jones earned a bachelor's degree from Howard University and subsequently taught English in Turkey as a member of the Peace Corps before applying to the University of Virginia School of Law in 1967; and

WHEREAS, Elaine Jones was one of only seven women and only two African Americans admitted in the Class of 1970; after graduation, she distinguished herself as a determined civil rights litigator and a trailblazing leader for other African American women in the legal field; and

WHEREAS, Elaine Jones joined the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund and spent the majority of her career with the organization, except two years when she served as special assistant to the Secretary of Transportation under President Gerald Ford, during which time she played a role in opening service in the United States Coast Guard to women; and

WHEREAS, in 1972, Elaine Jones was the counsel of record in the landmark United States Supreme Court case *Furman v. Georgia*, the decision that struck down death penalty statutes in 37 states and held for more than a decade; and

WHEREAS, Elaine Jones participated in numerous civil rights cases, including several employment discrimination cases and class action lawsuits; and

WHEREAS, in 1993, Elaine Jones became the first woman president and director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund; she expanded the organization's practice areas to include health care and environmental law while maintaining a strong focus on education, voting rights, criminal justice, and economic access; and

WHEREAS, after 34 years of outstanding service and leadership, Elaine Jones retired from the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund in 2004; and

WHEREAS, among many accolades throughout her career, Elaine Jones earned the 1998 Distinguished Alumna Award and the 1999 Thomas Jefferson Foundation Medal in Law from the Foundation and the University of Virginia; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate of Virginia, That Elaine R. Jones hereby be commended on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of her historic graduation from the University of Virginia School of Law; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Elaine R. Jones as an expression of the Senate of Virginia's admiration for her legacy of achievements and contributions to the legal field.

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