

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 172

Commending Chief Justice Donald W. Lemons.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 7, 2022
 Agreed to by the Senate, February 10, 2022

WHEREAS, Chief Justice Donald W. Lemons has served in every level of the Virginia judiciary, as a Substitute Judge on the General District Court and Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court for the City of Richmond; a Judge on the Circuit Court for the City of Richmond in the 13th Judicial Circuit; a Judge on the Court of Appeals of Virginia; a Justice on the Supreme Court of Virginia; and since 2015, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, Chief Justice Donald W. Lemons prized the advancement of legal knowledge. After graduating from the University of Virginia School of Law in 1976, Chief Justice Lemons joined his alma mater as an Assistant Dean and Assistant Professor of Law. During his later service on the bench, he was chosen as the A.L. Philpott Distinguished Adjunct Professor of Law and the John Marshall Professor of Judicial Studies at the University of Richmond School of Law and as a Distinguished Professor of Judicial Studies at the Washington and Lee University School of Law. He was named a Jessine Monaghan Fellow at the Washington and Lee University School of Law in recognition of his excellence in teaching law; and

WHEREAS, Chief Justice Donald W. Lemons' love of legal history and devotion to professionalism was recognized and honored by being selected as Master of the Bench for the John Marshall Inn of Court and the Lewis F. Powell, Jr. Inn of Court; President of the John Marshall Inn of Court in 2002; Honorary Bencher for the Middle Temple Inns of Court in London; and President of the American Inns of Court from 2010-2014; and

WHEREAS, Chief Justice Donald W. Lemons received countless awards for his service to the ideals of the law in our Commonwealth. Among them are the Virginia State Bar's Rakes Leadership in Education Award; the Dean's Medal for Judicial Excellence by the George Mason University Antonin Scalia Law School; the Rule of Law Day, Civility in the Law Award by the Virginia Law Foundation and Virginia Holocaust Museum; the Virginia Bar Association's Gerald L. Baliles Distinguished Service Award; and the American Inns of Court Lewis F. Powell Jr. Award for Professionalism and Ethics; and

WHEREAS, Chief Justice Donald W. Lemons contributed to many legislative reforms that improved the Virginia judiciary. Included among these efforts was his service as a member of a House and Senate Joint Subcommittee to study the domestic relations laws of Virginia, resulting in the adoption of the Equitable Distribution statute; his advocacy for the legislative approval of drug treatment courts that judicially monitor and supervise addicts in drug-related cases; his support for the legislative merger of law and equity procedures in Virginia courts; and his studied recommendation in favor of the recent legislative expansion of the jurisdiction of the Court of Appeals of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, in his role as Chief Justice Donald W. Lemons of the Supreme Court of Virginia, Lemons sagaciously balanced the competing demands of constancy and change. His leadership style respected the traditions of the past while embracing the never-ending task of initiating reforms for a better future. His emphasis on calm professionalism, both among judges and lawyers, was a wholesome force during challenging times. All of these characteristics showed their worth in recent memory when the Supreme Court of Virginia faced the challenge of providing access to Virginia courts during a pandemic and when the Supreme Court of Virginia performed its constitutional task of presiding over the judicial creation of the first nonpartisan legislative and congressional voting districts in the history of our Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Chief Justice Donald W. Lemons, for his dedicated service and inspired leadership as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation in honor of Chief Justice Donald W. Lemons, as an expression of the General Assembly's gratitude and appreciation.

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