

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA -- 1998 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 95

On the death of William B. Spong, Jr.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, January 23, 1998
Agreed to by the Senate, January 29, 1998

WHEREAS, William B. Spong, Jr., former United States Senator from Virginia and a public figure of rare stature for more than 40 years, died on October 8, 1997; and

WHEREAS, a native of Portsmouth and a graduate of Hampden-Sydney College, William Spong earned his law degree at the University of Virginia, studied for a year in Scotland at the University of Edinburgh, then returned to Virginia to teach at the Marshall-Wythe School of Law at The College of William and Mary; and

WHEREAS, William Spong became involved in politics when he ran successfully for the House of Delegates in 1953 and joined the "Young Turks," a group of moderate Democrats that forced the Byrd organization to spend more on public education; and

WHEREAS, continuing to challenge the Byrd political machine, William Spong won election to the Senate of Virginia in 1955 and served until he accomplished his biggest political upset in 1966, defeating 20-year incumbent A. Willis Robertson in the Democratic primary for the United States Senate; and

WHEREAS, William Spong served in the Senate for one term, before being upset himself by little-known Republican William L. Scott in 1972; and

WHEREAS, William Spong's political career spanned a time of great change in Virginia, from the dominance of the Byrd organization, through the rise of moderate Democrats, to the new-found power of the Republican Party; and

WHEREAS, following his service in the Senate, William Spong remained active and influential in Virginia's public affairs, particularly in the field of higher education; and

WHEREAS, from 1976 until 1985 William Spong was dean of the Marshall-Wythe School of Law at The College of William and Mary and is widely credited with reviving and rebuilding the law school's flagging fortunes; and

WHEREAS, William Spong served as interim president of Old Dominion University, where he won praise for boosting the institution's morale and elevating its profile in Richmond; and

WHEREAS, William Spong served on a wide range of commissions and councils, including a term on the State Council for Higher Education, chairman of the Commission on Public Education, which recommended major changes in public education in Virginia, and a commission that examined Virginia's needs into the next century; and

WHEREAS, throughout his long career of public service, William Spong was admired and respected by his allies and adversaries for his unquestioned integrity, for his remarkable sense of humor and thoughtful approach to the problems of public policy; and

WHEREAS, William Spong's manifold contributions to the Commonwealth, in the General Assembly, in the Congress and in leadership positions in Virginia's institutions of higher education, should be long remembered and well appreciated by the people of Virginia; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly mourn the loss of one of the most accomplished, influential and admired Virginians of the past half-century, William B. Spong, Jr.; 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 William B. Spong, Jr., as an expression of the great esteem in which his memory is held by the members of the General Assembly and the citizens of the Commonwealth.

ENROLLED

HOUSE