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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 423

Offered February 19, 2008

Celebrating the life of Thomas Roswell Mayfield.

Patrons—Abbitt and Hogan

WHEREAS, Thomas Roswell Mayfield, the seventh of 10 children, was born on February 9, 1925, in Boydton, and after a long and rich life entered into eternal rest on February 5, 2008; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Roswell Mayfield received his early education at Boydton Grade School, and following graduation from West End High School, he enlisted in the United States Army where he served his country honorably during World War II; and

WHEREAS, upon his discharge from military service in 1946, Thomas Roswell Mayfield attended Virginia State University, where he earned a bachelor of science degree in 1950 and a master of science degree in agricultural education and technical agriculture in 1962; he later pursued postgraduate studies at Virginia Tech, Longwood University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and the University of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Roswell Mayfield was the consummate educator, and before his retirement from the Prince Edward County School System in 1991, he served in numerous capacities, including as a teacher at the historic Robert Russa Moton High School in Farmville, and the Campbell County Public Schools; the principal of Worsham Elementary School, vocational education director, chairman of the Standards of Quality Planning Council, Clerk of the Works for public school construction, coordinator of vocational education, and deputy superintendent for Prince Edward County Public Schools; as Expert I for Vocational Training and Orientation for Rural Youth in Nigeria and as an agricultural education advisor in the Foreign Service of the U.S. Department of State in Ghana; and as a member of the International Labour Organization in Switzerland and a member of several Department of Education visiting committees to other school divisions; and

WHEREAS, after his retirement in 1991, Thomas Roswell Mayfield continued to support public education enthusiastically and devoted himself to public service and participation in numerous educational, cultural, and civic organizations, among them, the Retired Teachers Association, Virginia Piedmont Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa, Virginia State University Alumnae Association, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, American Association of Retired Persons, Preservation Alliance of Virginia, Senior Citizens of Prince Edward Board of Directors, Prince Edward Public Schools Endowment, Inc., National Association of Retired Federal Employees, Robert Russa Moton Museum where he served as past president of the Board of Directors, Le Cercle DePaires Sociale of which he was a founding member, life member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, former board member of Habitat for Humanity, Post Office Advisory Committee, Kennedy Center of the Stars, the National Symphony Orchestra Association of the John F. Kennedy Center, and an auxiliary member of the Martha E. Forrester Council of Women, which purchased Robert Russa Moton High School from Prince Edward County; and

WHEREAS, in 1951 Thomas Roswell Mayfield was a teacher at Robert Russa Moton High School during the student strike to protest the inferior public education and facilities for African-American students that resulted in a lawsuit that became a part of Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), sparking Virginia's course of Massive Resistance; and

WHEREAS, after the closing of Prince Edward County public schools in 1955 to avoid desegregation, Thomas Roswell Mayfield, like other African-American teachers, was forced to seek employment elsewhere and taught in the Campbell County school system; he returned to Prince Edward County in 1963 to work in the Free Schools for Blacks, which were established to educate African-American children after the school closings, and later taught again in the Prince Edward County public schools when such schools were reopened in 1964; and

WHEREAS, the courage of the student strikers contributed to the dismantling of the segregated public school system in Virginia and throughout the nation, and Thomas Roswell Mayfield worked tirelessly and passionately to help convert the high school facility into the Robert Russa Moton Museum Center for the Study of Civil Rights in Education, which has been designated a National Historic Landmark, and he served as the first president of the Board of Directors for the Museum; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Roswell Mayfield has received numerous awards and recognition for his outstanding contributions to his profession and community; however, the crown of his achievements is the Robert Russa Moton Museum Center for the Study of Civil Rights in Education, an historic and educational resource to the Commonwealth and nation; and

WHEREAS, although the hearts of those who knew and loved Thomas Roswell Mayfield have been

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59 saddened by his loss, his memory and legacy endure as a testimony and challenge to future generations;
60 now, therefore, be it

61 RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby
62 note with great sadness the loss of Thomas Roswell Mayfield, native son, and venerated and respected
63 educator; and, be it

64 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution
65 for presentation to the family of Thomas Roswell Mayfield as an expression of the General Assembly's
66 respect for his memory and outstanding contributions to the people of Prince Edward County and the
67 Commonwealth.