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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 140

Offered January 25, 2008

Commending Gordon Churchill Willis, Sr.

Patrons—Edwards and Smith; Delegates: Fralin and Ware, O.

WHEREAS, Gordon Churchill Willis, Sr., of Roanoke, a respected citizen, community benefactor, and visionary leader, is recognized for his longtime and outstanding service to the Roanoke Valley community and the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, Gordon Churchill Willis, Sr., attended Hampden-Sydney College and graduated from the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis in 1943; and

WHEREAS, Gordon Willis served his country in the United States Navy during World War II, first on a battleship supporting the landing of American troops in Japan in preparation for the invasion of the country, and later as a Naval fighter pilot aboard the USS *Franklin D. Roosevelt* flying F4U Corsairs; and

WHEREAS, after the war, Gordon Willis returned to his hometown of Roanoke in 1947 at the request of his father, Holman Willis, Sr., to serve as president of Rockydale Quarries; and

WHEREAS, through astute leadership and in consultation with other business leaders in Southwest Virginia, Gordon Willis was instrumental in helping to sustain the economy of the Roanoke Valley during the severe economic slowdown in the late 1950s; and

WHEREAS, over the years, Gordon Willis has served on the boards of many civic organizations, including as chairman of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia and as a member of the board of what is now Virginia Western Community College, which awarded him an honorary degree for his outstanding service; and

WHEREAS, throughout his life of selfless public service, Gordon Willis has received numerous awards and accolades, including the Noel C. Taylor Award from Total Action Against Poverty, a B'nai B'rith Award for his principled position regarding full inclusion in society for people of the Jewish faith, and he was named a Cultural Laureate of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, Gordon Willis has been a strong advocate of highway safety and advanced engineering, and through his efforts in cooperation with Virginia Tech, he helped establish the Smart Road between Blacksburg and Roanoke, which was named in his honor in May 2001; and

WHEREAS, a dedicated and unpretentious community benefactor and visionary leader, Gordon Willis has served his fellow Virginians with great integrity and humility and has given his time and immense resources, as well as his invaluable counsel to improve the quality of life of countless Virginians; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly commend Gordon Churchill Willis, Sr., on his longtime and outstanding service to the citizens of the Roanoke Valley and Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Gordon Churchill Willis, Sr., as an expression of the General Assembly's appreciation of his exemplary achievements and gratitude for his many contributions to the well-being of the Commonwealth.

INTRODUCED

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