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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 16

Offered January 9, 2008

Prefiled December 17, 2007

Celebrating the life of the Reverend Dr. Willie R. Ponds, Sr.

Patron—Miller, Y.B.

WHEREAS, the Reverend Dr. Willie R. Ponds, Sr., of Norfolk, a respected citizen, public servant, and beloved minister on the Eastern Shore, died on June 10, 2007; and

WHEREAS, the eighth of 13 siblings, Willie Ponds was born on June 22, 1932, in Red Bay, Florida, a son of the late Earnest and Idella Ponds; and

WHEREAS, Willie Ponds attended Rouhlac High School in Chipley, Florida, graduated from the school of ministry at Norfolk State University, completed a degree in industrial management at Tidewater Community College, and furthered his education in postgraduate studies at Old Dominion University, Ohio University, and Rutgers University; and

WHEREAS, Willie Ponds married Lillie Pretlow Ponds with whom he had a wonderful 32 years of marriage, and the couple had five wonderful children, the Reverend Willie R. Ponds, Jr., Cathy Ponds-Jaiteh, Beverly Sykes, Regina Rivera, and the late Jennifer Ponds; and

WHEREAS, Willie Ponds served his country in the United States Army, and transferring to Norfolk, became one of the first African Americans to serve as president of the Federal Managers Association at Norfolk's Naval Supply Center; and

WHEREAS, Willie Ponds also served the Department of the Navy as board chairman of what is now the PortAlliance Federal Credit Union, and with his previous service in the United States Army, retired in 1987, after an exemplary 33-year career working for the military; and

WHEREAS, Willie Ponds began his ministry at Mount Hermon Baptist Church, enthusiastically serving wherever he was needed, including as Sunday school superintendent, adult Bible class teacher, choir president, and as a member of both the usher and deacon boards; and

WHEREAS, called to minister to the residents of the Eastern Shore, Willie Ponds joined Herbert Baptist Church as senior pastor, where he ministered for 40 years, and about the same time, he was asked to preach for the Antioch Baptist Church congregation, where he ministered for 45 years until his death; and

WHEREAS, over the years, Willie Ponds gave his time and immense talents to many civic and religious organizations, including as the president of the Virginia/Maryland Baptist Ministers Conference, a community counselor for the United Way, a tutor for the Norfolk Public School System, and as a member of the American Legion Post 104, the NAACP, and the Women's Baptist Missionary and Educational Association on the Eastern Shore; and

WHEREAS, Willie Ponds first served as vice president and then as president, beginning in 2005, of the Campostella Civic League in Norfolk and was the spokesman for the organization before the city council and the planning commission on important issues; he also served as a member of the mayor's task force to improve the quality of life in the City of Norfolk; and

WHEREAS, Willie Ponds traveled extensively in the Holy Land and was honored by Jerusalem's mayor as a "Jerusalem Pilgrim"; and

WHEREAS, living every day concerned with the well-being of his fellow citizens, Willie Ponds embraced his personal motto "If I can help somebody as I travel along, then my living will not be in vain"; and

WHEREAS, Willie Ponds will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his devoted wife; his wonderful children and their families, including six grandchildren; his numerous other loving family members; and his countless friends and admirers in Norfolk and on the Eastern Shore of Virginia; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly mourn the passing of an outstanding Virginian, the Reverend Dr. Willie R. Ponds, Sr.; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of the Reverend Dr. Willie R. Ponds, Sr., as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

INTRODUCED

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