

2008 SESSION

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088081276

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 23

Offered January 9, 2008

Prefiled December 28, 2007

*Celebrating the life of Herbert M. Collins, Sr.*

Patron—Miller, Y.B.

WHEREAS, Herbert M. Collins, Sr., of Norfolk, revered citizen, former city council member, and noted voting rights activist who helped bring about the ward system in Norfolk, died on June 17, 2007; and

WHEREAS, a lifelong resident of Norfolk, Herbert Collins grew up in the city, attended Norfolk Public Schools, and was a graduate of Norfolk State University; and

WHEREAS, an industrious and astute businessman, Herbert Collins was the pleasant and helpful longtime owner and operator of the local grocery store, Long's Market, located on Ballentine Boulevard; and

WHEREAS, Herbert Collins most enjoyed conversing with his friends and neighbors at the store, and he was always willing to help his fellow citizens in need whenever he could; and

WHEREAS, Herbert Collins' great love and concern for his community spurred him to question how he and his neighbors were represented on city council; and

WHEREAS, prior to 1983, the Norfolk's at-large voting system to elect city council candidates resulted in the African-American community and the blue-collar east and north side communities left without direct representation by one of their own citizens; and

WHEREAS, in 1983, Herbert Collins helped launch a lawsuit to change the voting system and after an arduous, eight-year fight in which the plaintiffs lost twice in United States District Court, the case was appealed to the Supreme Court; and

WHEREAS, the high court saw validity in the historic case and made its ruling that would stun the Norfolk establishment and divide the city into five-plus voting wards, transforming the nature of city politics and alter its balance of power; and

WHEREAS, Herbert Collins was one of the exuberant council members elected under the new system in the early 1990s, and through his hard work and determination, he opened the door for many other African Americans to follow as elected officials; and

WHEREAS, Herbert Collins served eight years on the city council ending in 2002, including six years as the vice mayor; and

WHEREAS, throughout his long and distinguished tenure as a member of city council, Herbert Collins fought for open and inclusive government and the civil rights of his fellow citizens, and Norfolk is a better city because of his efforts; and

WHEREAS, Herbert Collins will be remembered as one of the most important political figures of modern Norfolk political history, because he fought for fair representation for his fellow citizens; and

WHEREAS, Herbert Collins will be greatly missed by his wife, Uwandolyn B. Collins, and his loving family; his numerous colleagues and friends; and the citizens of the City of Norfolk; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly mourn the passing of a fine public servant and outstanding Virginian, Herbert M. Collins, Sr.; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Herbert M. Collins, Sr., as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

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