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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 53

Offered January 9, 2008

Prefiled January 8, 2008

*Celebrating the life of Gregory Cherry.*_____
Patron—Locke

WHEREAS, Gregory Cherry of Newport News, an outstanding citizen and admired community supporter, died on August 18, 2007; and

WHEREAS, Gregory Cherry was the first baby born on January 1, 1955, and the son of the late William and Clara Cherry of Newport News; he graduated from Peninsula Catholic High School in 1973, attended St. Mary's Seminary, and later received a bachelor's degree from Kansas State University; and

WHEREAS, for many years, Gregory Cherry served his country in the United States Army as a noncommissioned officer escort to the United States Congress, and he also served in the National Honor Guard and played taps for many ceremonial events; and

WHEREAS, in 1996, Gregory Cherry returned to his beloved hometown of Newport News and became involved in community revitalization efforts, and in 2000, he bought from the city the historic James A. Fields House, which was in great disrepair; and

WHEREAS, an avid researcher and history lover, Gregory Cherry worked to lovingly restore the house and diligently preserve the legacy of James Apostles Fields, a runaway slave who managed to overcome oppression and graduate in 1871 from Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, now Hampton University, and go on to serve as a justice of the peace, attorney for the Commonwealth, and member of the Virginia General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, Gregory Cherry researched the history and details of James A. Fields' life and his home, which in 1908 became the site of Whittaker Memorial Hospital, the first black hospital in Newport News; and

WHEREAS, because of his passion for the house and its legacy, Gregory Cherry applied and successfully won recognition for Fields House in the Virginia Landmark Register, National Register of Historic Places, and Virginia Civil War Trails; and

WHEREAS, Gregory Cherry was instrumental in founding several community programs and organizations in the city, including the Civil Guard and the Beyond the School Doors mentoring programs for young men, as well as the Downtown Newport News Merchants and Neighbors Association, Inc.; and

WHEREAS, Gregory Cherry believed that "history is the glue that bonds society" and that tourism was a great boon for Newport News, and he studied Civil War history and was an avid civil war re-enactor both as a Union soldier and a Confederate Ethiopian serenader, enabling him to be an ambassador for the city wherever he traveled; and

WHEREAS, a fascinating and knowledgeable amateur historian, Gregory Cherry worked for some time for the City of Newport News at the Newport News Visitors Center, where he received Employee of the Year honors in 2002; and

WHEREAS, a strong community supporter throughout his life, Gregory Cherry served many civic organizations over the years, including as vice-chair of the District I Planning Task Force and chair of the Commemoration Advisory Commission; as a member of People to People and the Dr. Martin Luther King Memorial Committee; and as a captain of the James A. Fields House Adopt-A-Spot, Clean the Bay Day, Relay for Life, and March of Dimes campaigns; and

WHEREAS, a talented musician, Gregory Cherry enjoyed playing trumpet and flugelhorn as a member of the Special Blends Jazz Ensemble; and

WHEREAS, Gregory Cherry was a faithful member of Living Waters Christian Fellowship, where he served as an elder, played trumpet and shofar in the worship ministry, and was active in the church's many missions in the community; and

WHEREAS, Gregory Cherry will be fondly remembered for his love of music, his family, and his community and greatly missed by his wife Dr. Saundra Nelson Cherry, his mother Clara Cherry; his nine beloved brothers and sisters and numerous other family members and friends; and the citizens of Newport News; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly mourn the passing of a fine community supporter and outstanding Virginian, Gregory Cherry; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Gregory Cherry as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his

59 memory.