

2011 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 934

Celebrating the life of William Edward Taylor.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 22, 2011
Agreed to by the Senate, February 25, 2011

WHEREAS, William Edward Taylor, a legendary jazz musician, educator, composer, and admired alumnus of Virginia State University, died on December 28, 2010; and

WHEREAS, as a young man, William "Billy" Taylor followed in his father's footsteps by attending Virginia State College (now University) and pledging Kappa Alpha Psi; and

WHEREAS, as a student at Virginia State College, William "Billy" Taylor began to hone his extraordinary natural talent under the tutelage of the College's outstanding faculty who recognized his incredible potential; and

WHEREAS, after graduation, Billy Taylor embarked on his groundbreaking career by playing piano professionally with Ben Webster's Quartet on New York's 52nd Street before serving as house pianist at the jazz club Birdland alongside famed jazz masters Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Miles Davis; and

WHEREAS, a prolific composer, Billy Taylor wrote over 350 songs, including the legendary "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free," in addition to numerous works for theatre, dance, and symphony orchestras; and

WHEREAS, an admired educator, Billy Taylor later received a master's degree and doctorate in music education from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst; he later served as a Duke Ellington Fellow at Yale University and as the Robert L. Jones Distinguished Professor of Music at East Carolina University; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Taylor not only educated his students but the country as to the merits of jazz as the host for an acclaimed radio show and award-winning series for National Public Radio; in the early 1980s, Dr. Taylor served as the arts correspondent for CBS' Sunday Morning, sharing his insight and wealth of knowledge with the nation; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Taylor also became the first African American music director of NBC's "The Subject is Jazz," which brought the sounds of jazz giants into the living rooms of millions of Americans; and

WHEREAS, a highly respected figure, Dr. Taylor was one of only three jazz musicians appointed to the National Council of the Arts and served as the artistic advisor for jazz to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, where he developed the Louis Armstrong Legacy Vocalists series and the annual Mary Lou Williams Women in Jazz Festival; and

WHEREAS, during the course of his long and illustrious career, Dr. Taylor was the recipient of two Peabody Awards, an Emmy Award, a Grammy Award, the National Medal of Arts award, the Tiffany Award, and the Lifetime Achievement Award from *Downbeat Magazine*; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Taylor was elected to the International Association for Jazz Education Hall of Fame for his lifetime of extraordinary achievement and advocacy of jazz music; and

WHEREAS, current and future generations will be able to appreciate and reflect on Dr. Taylor's remarkable life and achievements through the study of his record albums, books, music scores, awards, and artwork which he generously donated to his beloved alma mater, Virginia State University; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of an influential contributor to the arts and beloved jazz legend and advocate, William Edward Taylor; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of William Edward Taylor as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

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