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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 520

Offered February 21, 2011

Celebrating the life of the Reverend Dr. Benjamin W. Robertson, Sr.

Patron—Marsh

WHEREAS, Dr. Benjamin W. Robertson, Sr., was born on April 6, 1931, in Roanoke, and passed from this life to eternal life on February 20, 2011; and

WHEREAS, reared in a loving and Christian home, Dr. Benjamin W. Robertson, Sr., preached his first sermon in 1948 at the young age of 17; he earned a bachelor of arts degree from Virginia Union University, a bachelor of arts degree in special education from Virginia State University, the master of divinity degree from Virginia Seminary and College in Lynchburg, and the doctor of ministry and doctor of divinity degrees from Virginia Seminary and College; he also earned the Doctor of Laws degree from Union Baptist Seminary in Houston, Texas, and he was the recipient of numerous honorary degrees, including the 1997 Doctor of Humane Letters from Virginia Union University; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Benjamin W. Robertson, Sr., founded the Richmond Virginia Seminary to provide opportunities for higher education to persons seeking an undergraduate or graduate degrees in religion or business studies; and

WHEREAS, active in state and national religious organizations, Dr. Benjamin W. Robertson, Sr., was the founder of the National Christian Convention, was one of the 23 founders of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc., and served as treasurer of the Virginia State Baptist Convention and as president and as a member of the board of trustees of the Virginia Seminary and College in Lynchburg; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Benjamin W. Robertson, Sr., pastor emeritus of Cedar Street Baptist Church of God, was called to the pastorate in 1955 at the age of 24, and during his tenure, the congregation grew from 400 to 4,000 contributing members and the church never experienced any financial difficulties; and

WHEREAS, the dean of Richmond pastors due to his lengthy service in the pastoral ministry, Dr. Benjamin W. Robertson, Sr., faithfully served the church's congregation for 52 years before his retirement in May 2007, and after his retirement, he remained involved in numerous religious and community activities and continued to serve the Cedar Street Baptist Church of God congregation by performing eulogies and weddings for members; and

WHEREAS, under the leadership of Dr. Benjamin W. Robertson, Sr., the church was honored by having the street on which it is located named for it, and colleagues and congregants who knew Dr. Benjamin W. Robertson, Sr., well have described him as a visionary, organizer, scholar, charismatic preacher, and determined God-fearing leader; and

WHEREAS, among his many awards and accolades, Dr. Benjamin W. Robertson, Sr., was honored for his contributions to religion and education, including the first Lifetime Achievement Award from The Virginia State Baptist Convention, the Outstanding Service Award from the Richmond branch of the NAACP, the Humanitarian Award from Richmond Community Hospital, and the honorary citizenship and a key to the City of Roanoke; he was appointed to the *Brown v. Board of Education* 50th Anniversary Commission by President George W. Bush, and was the only minister appointed to the elite federal commission; and

WHEREAS, the author of two books, *Just as He Promised*, and *Led by the Spirit*, Dr. Benjamin W. Robertson, Sr., poured his heart and understanding about the movement of God into his writings to inspire others to persevere in the faith, and he also appeared in the film documentary, "The Perfect Candidate," appeared on the cover of *Educational Pathways Magazine*, which included historical legends Harriett Tubman, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and United States Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall; and

WHEREAS, an inspirational leader to numerous ministers, lay people, the community, and his beloved congregation of Cedar Street Baptist Church of God, Dr. Benjamin W. Robertson, Sr., dedicated his life and career to guiding others in their spiritual life and preparing young people for leadership positions in the church, the community, and the nation; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Benjamin W. Robertson, Sr., will be deeply missed and remembered always by friends and members of the Cedar Street Baptist Church of God congregation whose lives he touched in profound ways; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of the Reverend Dr. Benjamin W. Robertson, Sr.; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Mrs. Delores Robertson, beloved wife of the Reverend Dr. Benjamin W. Robertson, Sr.,

INTRODUCED

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59 as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.