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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 310

Offered January 9, 2013

Prefiled January 8, 2013

Celebrating the life of Albert Austin Dawson, Jr.

Patrons—Marsh, Barker, Deeds, Puckett and Stuart; Delegates: Dance, Hope, James and Plum

WHEREAS, Albert Austin Dawson, Jr., the first African American elected circuit court clerk in Virginia, passed away in Petersburg at his home on November 27, 2012; and

WHEREAS, Albert Austin Dawson, Jr., attended Petersburg public schools and graduated in 1964 from Peabody High School, where he earned his nickname, "Shot," playing basketball; he attended Tougaloo College for two years before leaving to enlist in the United States Air Force, where he served his country proudly and valiantly in Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, at the end of an illustrious military career, he returned to college, earning a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Virginia Union University in 1974 and a master's degree in education administration and supervision from Virginia State University in 1977 and completed courses in guidance and counseling at Virginia State University in 1978; and

WHEREAS, Albert Austin Dawson, Jr., was an esteemed educator and school administrator in the Petersburg Public School System for over 20 years, teaching at Blandford Elementary School and serving as vice principal of I.B. Pittman Vocational School during the 1970s and 1980s before retiring in 2002; and

WHEREAS, politically active for many years, Albert Austin Dawson, Jr., was a former Petersburg city councilman and ran unsuccessfully in 1985 for a seat in the Virginia House of Delegates; however, in 1987 he was elected Clerk of the Circuit Court for the City of Petersburg in a landslide, becoming the first African American to hold the position in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, while serving in the post from 1988 until 1996, Albert Austin Dawson, Jr., is credited with modernizing the circuit court clerk's office and implementing equal opportunity employment policies; he rehired the opponent he defeated in the election to work with him; and after leaving the circuit court clerk's office, he returned to teaching; and

WHEREAS, Albert Austin Dawson, Jr., nurtured in a home in which generations before him instilled strong education, entrepreneurial, political, civil rights, and faith values, engaged in the fierce struggle for civil rights and was actively involved in civil rights demonstrations and protests in which he was water hosed and subjected to other forms of mistreatment; and

WHEREAS, a community leader and former president of the Petersburg branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Albert Austin Dawson, Jr., worked tirelessly to help other African Americans win elected office; and

WHEREAS, Albert Austin Dawson, Jr., took great joy in mentoring young people and helping the homeless and downtrodden because he believed everyone should have a "fair shake at the American dream"; and

WHEREAS, his deep and abiding faith borne by a personal relationship with God informed his beliefs, decisions, and actions; affectionately called "Butch" by family, "Shot" by friends, and "Daddy" by his children, he was loved by his family and friends; also considered the family historian, Albert Austin Dawson, Jr., loved traveling to Staunton to the Dawson/Crawford family reunions to inform the elders and children upon whose shoulders they stood; and

WHEREAS, Albert Austin Dawson, Jr., was a pioneer and remarkable man whose life was a legacy for all who loved and know him; 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 Albert Austin Dawson, Jr., first African American elected Clerk of the Circuit Court for the City of Petersburg; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Albert Austin Dawson, Jr. as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

INTRODUCED

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