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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 258

Offered February 8, 2016

Celebrating the life of Allix Bledsoe James.

Patrons—McClellan, Bagby, Carr, Loupassi and McQuinn; Senator: Dance

WHEREAS, Allix Bledsoe James of Richmond, president emeritus of Virginia Union University, a distinguished public servant whose decades-long quest for racial equality was conducted with dignity and resolve, and a visionary civic and spiritual leader, died on September 26, 2015; and

WHEREAS, Allix James, who was a native of Marshall, Texas, was reared in San Antonio, where he attended junior college; he enrolled in Virginia Union University in Richmond in 1942, and 28 years later he became president of the university; and

WHEREAS, the segregation that Allix James encountered upon his arrival in Richmond was a harsh introduction to the city he would call home for the rest of his life; after a tiring and dirty train ride from Washington, D.C., in a segregated car behind the engine, he was forced to wait at the end of the line for a taxi to take him to campus, then was not allowed to be served at the main counter of a restaurant, and went to bed without supper; and

WHEREAS, profoundly affected by his experiences, Allix James dedicated his life to the pursuit of social justice and civil rights; he went on to earn bachelor's and master's degrees from Virginia Union University (VUU); he also attended Union Theological Seminary, now known as Union Presbyterian Seminary, where he received a second master's degree and a doctoral degree; and

WHEREAS, in 1947, Allix James returned to VUU as an instructor of biblical studies; he soon was promoted to dean of students, then became dean of the graduate school of theology before being named vice president of the university; and

WHEREAS, in 1970, Allix James became the seventh president of VUU; under his leadership, VUU's academic reputation improved, buildings and programs were updated, corporate donations increased, and a music program was started; and

WHEREAS, Allix James was president of VUU until 1979, and in that role he worked tirelessly for the betterment of the university and the city it called home; he was steadfast in his determination to bring Richmond residents together—to learn from one another, to understand one another, and to work together for the betterment of the city; and

WHEREAS, as a community builder and one of the founders of Richmond Renaissance, Allix James helped promote economic development; he also served on many governing boards, including Dominion Virginia Power, and was the first African American to become head of the Virginia Board of Education; and

WHEREAS, a steadfast supporter of Richmond, Allix James was convinced that persuading leaders from all parts of the city to work together was crucial and would help create the sense of unity needed to move the city forward; and

WHEREAS, Allix James, who was pastor of three churches, was president of an international association of theological schools and the Virginia Region of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, now known as the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities; and

WHEREAS, Allix James, who was preceded in death by Susie, his wife of 67 years, and his son, Alvan, will be greatly missed and fondly remembered by his daughter, Portia; many family members, friends, colleagues, and students; and the people of metropolitan Richmond who today live in a vibrant and resurgent city; 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 Allix Bledsoe James, president emeritus of Virginia Union University, who was a distinguished advocate for civil rights, pastor, and respected educator; 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 Allix Bledsoe James as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

INTRODUCED

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