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## SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 56

Offered January 13, 2016

Prefiled January 8, 2016

*Celebrating the life of George Burke.*

Patrons—Saslaw, Barker, Dance, Deeds, Ebbin, Edwards, Favola, Howell, Marsden, McPike, Petersen, Ruff and Wexton; Delegates: Bagby, Bell, John J., Boysko, Bulova, Carr, Davis, Filler-Corn, Heretick, Herring, Hope, Jones, Kory, Krizek, Landes, Levine, Lindsey, Lopez, McQuinn, Morefield, Murphy, Plum, Rasoul, Sickles, Simon, Spruill, Sullivan, Taylor, Torian, Ware and Watts

WHEREAS, George Burke, a trusted advisor to numerous public servants and the chair of the 11th Congressional Democratic Committee of Virginia, who mentored and inspired countless young leaders in Northern Virginia, died on October 30, 2015; and

WHEREAS, a native of the Bronx, New York, George Burke attended the University of New Hampshire and began his journalism career as a freelance writer and photographer for the Associated Press and *Newsweek*, *Discover*, and *Yankee* magazines; and

WHEREAS, in 1974, George Burke was hired by *Foster's Daily Democrat* in New Hampshire, where he worked for more than five years, becoming state editor and Exeter bureau chief; during this time, he won numerous awards, including Best News and Story of 1978 from the New England Press Association; and

WHEREAS, in 1979, George Burke relocated to Northern Virginia to accept a position with New Hampshire Congressman Norman D'Amours as his communications director, and served in the same post for New York Congressman James H. Scheuer from 1985 to 1987; he also served three terms as president of the Association of House Democratic Press Secretaries, and was a press officer for the Democratic National Conventions in 1980 and 1988; and

WHEREAS, George Burke left Capitol Hill to become director of the department of public relations and communication for the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), a union representing more than 300,000 professional firefighters; in 2000, he was promoted to assistant to the general president for communications and media, where he served and advocated for firefighters and first responders until his retirement from the IAFF in 2004; and

WHEREAS, in the days and weeks following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, George Burke worked with national media on the IAFF's response to the disaster and continued to be a tireless advocate for first responders throughout his life; and

WHEREAS, George Burke was elected chair of the 11th Congressional District Democratic Committee in 2005 and served as an advisor to numerous campaigns throughout Northern Virginia; he sought to strengthen the Democratic Party by encouraging fair representation of diverse interests; and

WHEREAS, in 2009, George Burke returned to Capitol Hill and ably served as communications director to United States Representative Gerry Connolly of Virginia's 11th District for more than three terms; and

WHEREAS, George Burke hosted a local political television program, "Inside Scoop," interviewing local politicians and exploring the issues, which aired on the Fairfax Public Access channel; and

WHEREAS, George was a gifted man of many talents, who spent 31 years as a professional ski instructor at Liberty Mountain; he was a spellbinding storyteller with an incisive wit and lived his life with gusto; and

WHEREAS, George Burke was a man of integrity who served his party, his principles, and his country to the utmost of his considerable ability; and

WHEREAS, George Burke will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his wife of 42 years, Sharon; children, Ian, Caitlin, and Sean, and their families; and numerous other family members and friends; 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 George Burke, a dedicated servant to Northern Virginia, the Commonwealth, and the United States; and, be it

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