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SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 19

Offered January 13, 2016

Prefiled January 7, 2016

Celebrating the life of Vincent Johns Thomas.

Patrons—Lewis, Alexander, Deeds, Norment and Wagner

WHEREAS, Vincent Johns Thomas, an accomplished businessman, dedicated community leader, and respected former mayor of Norfolk who helped secure a strong future for the city, died on November 7, 2015; and

WHEREAS, a lifelong resident of Norfolk, Vincent Thomas attended Norfolk Public Schools and graduated from Maury High School, where he served as class president; he earned a bachelor's degree from Virginia Military Institute and graduated with the John H. French Medal; and

WHEREAS, after graduation, Vincent Thomas joined many of the other young men of his generation in service to his country during World War II; as a first lieutenant in the United States Army Signal Corps, he helped introduce new and modified radar equipment to troops in the Pacific Theater; and

WHEREAS, Vincent Thomas returned home to the Commonwealth and joined the family coal export business, Johns Brothers, Inc.; over the course of his 50-year career with the company, he helped it transition to become a fuel oil, heating, air conditioning, and electronic security business and retired as chair of the board in 1996; and

WHEREAS, Vincent Thomas enjoyed a long career in public service, beginning with the Norfolk School Board in 1960; he served as chair of the Norfolk School Board from 1964 to 1972, then was appointed to the Virginia State Board of Education, where he served for four years, including two as president, and chaired a commission on education for individuals with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, desirous to be of further service to his fellow residents, Vincent Thomas ran for and was elected to the Norfolk City Council and served as mayor from 1976 to 1984; during his tenure as mayor, the city revitalized the downtown area and developed Waterside, a marketplace along the Elizabeth River; and

WHEREAS, Vincent Thomas volunteered his time and wise leadership with several local civic and service organizations, including as president of the Greater Norfolk Corporation and Virginia International Terminals and chair of the Future of Hampton Roads; he remained a proud and active alumnus of Virginia Military Institute throughout his life; and

WHEREAS, a standout athlete in both high school and college, Vincent Thomas enjoyed playing tennis for much of his life; he participated in numerous local and regional tournaments, specializing in doubles games, and was one of the founders of the Virginia Tennis Association; and

WHEREAS, Vincent Thomas will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his wife of 68 years, Elizabeth; children, Allison and Vincent, and their families; and numerous other family members, friends, and colleagues; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate of Virginia hereby note with great sadness the loss of Vincent Johns Thomas, an admired businessman, public servant, and community leader in Norfolk; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Vincent Johns Thomas as an expression of the Senate of Virginia's respect for his memory.

INTRODUCED

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