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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 475

Offered March 5, 2018

Celebrating the life of Irving Comer.

Patrons—Sullivan; Senators: Barker, Black, Chase, Cosgrove, Dance, DeSteph, Ebbin, Favola, Howell, Locke, Lucas, Marsden, McClellan, McPike, Newman, Peake, Petersen, Reeves, Ruff, Spruill, Stuart, Sturtevant, Suetterlein, Surovell, Vogel, Wagner and Wexton

WHEREAS, Irving Comer, a beloved father and respected law-enforcement professional who broke down barriers as the first African American to be sworn in as a police officer in the Arlington County Police Department, died on November 23, 2017; and

WHEREAS, a Richmond native, Irving Comer attended Armstrong High School, where he was student council president and salutatorian of his graduating class; he received a full scholarship to Virginia State University and later earned a bachelor's degree from The American University and a master's degree from Southern Illinois University; and

WHEREAS, Irving Comer served his country as a member of the United States Marine Corps from 1963 to 1967, obtaining the rank of sergeant; and

WHEREAS, in 1967, Irving Comer joined the Arlington County Police Department as a communications specialist; he quickly impressed the department leaders with his talent and dedication, and, after just three months on the job, he was asked to become a sworn officer; and

WHEREAS, after receiving assurances that he would serve the entire community and not just minority neighborhoods, Irving Comer agreed to join the Arlington County Police Department and was sworn in as its first black officer in December 1967; and

WHEREAS, Irving Comer went on to serve as an Arlington County police officer for 24 years, serving as a school resource officer at Thomas Jefferson Junior High School, a youth resource detective, and a recruiter for the Northern Virginia Police Minority Recruitment Office; and

WHEREAS, among many other accomplishments as a police officer, Irving Comer established an innovative Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Program, created Arlington County's first ride-along program, and served as an instructor at the Northern Virginia Criminal Justice Training Academy; and

WHEREAS, in 1983, Irving Comer was one of seven black police officers who successfully filed a lawsuit with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission revealing a longstanding policy of discrimination against African Americans in the Arlington County Police Department; as a result, the department agreed to increase promotions for minorities and women; and

WHEREAS, Irving Comer retired from the Arlington County Police Department in May 1992; he later served as a part-time professor at Germanna Community College and Northern Virginia Community College; and

WHEREAS, through his distinguished service as a police officer, Irving Comer left a legacy of respect for equality and justice and helped pave the way for future minority law-enforcement personnel; and

WHEREAS, Irving Comer will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his daughters, Pamela and Angela, and their families; his mother, Mary; and numerous other family members, close friends, and Arlington County residents; 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 Irving Comer, a trailblazing member of the Arlington County Police Department who selflessly served the community; 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 Irving Comer as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

INTRODUCED

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