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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 236

Offered March 5, 2018

Commending the Reverend Howard-John Wesley.

Patrons—Ebbin, Barker, Locke and Saslaw; Delegates: Herring and McQuinn

WHEREAS, on September 30, 2018, the Reverend Howard-John Wesley will celebrate 10 years of providing spiritual leadership to the congregation of Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria; and

WHEREAS, a native of the South Side of Chicago, Reverend Wesley earned a bachelor's degree from Duke University in biomedical engineering and electrical engineering; and

WHEREAS, after being called to the ministry, Reverend Wesley attended Boston University School of Theology and Northern Baptist Seminary, where he received a doctorate of ministry in preaching; he is currently part of the inaugural cohort in the Ph.D. program in African American Preaching and Sacred Rhetoric at Christian Theological Seminary; and

WHEREAS, since 2008, Reverend Wesley has served as senior pastor at Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria; he is only the eighth senior pastor in the church's 215-year history; and

WHEREAS, under Reverend Wesley's leadership, Alfred Street Baptist Church has grown from 2,500 members to over 7,000 members; the church holds four weekend services and serves the community through 83 active ministries; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Wesley addresses the most challenging social issues of our time head-on in his sermons, three of which are archived in the faith-based collection of the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C.; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Wesley was a favorite preacher of President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama, who attended several Easter Sunday services at Alfred Street Baptist Church; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Wesley reaches millions of listeners through videos and a radio broadcast called *Faith Forward*; he has twice been selected by the online magazine *The Root* as one of the top 100 most influential African Americans in the nation; and

WHEREAS, widely respected for his spiritual wisdom and experience, Reverend Wesley serves as an adjunct professor at Hartford Seminary, Boston University, and Virginia Theological Seminary; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Wesley also serves on the boards of Virginia Union University, the John Leland Center for Theological Studies, Duke Divinity School, and the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Missionary Convention; and

WHEREAS, in 2016, Reverend Wesley received the Chairman's Award for his work in social justice at the 47th Annual NAACP Image Awards; and

WHEREAS, throughout his distinguished career, Reverend Wesley has touched countless lives and led his congregation in continued growth in fellowship and service; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend the Reverend Howard-John Wesley on the occasion of his 10th anniversary as pastor of Alfred Street Baptist Church; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Reverend Howard-John Wesley as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for his spiritual leadership and service to the Alexandria community and the Commonwealth.

INTRODUCED

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