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## SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 64

Offered March 8, 2018

*Celebrating the life of the Reverend William Franklin Graham, Jr.*

Patrons—Suetterlein, Barker, Black, Carrico, Chafin, Chase, Cosgrove, Deeds, DeSteph, Dunnavant, Edwards, Hanger, Lewis, Marsden, McDougle, McPike, Newman, Norment, Obenshain, Peake, Petersen, Reeves, Ruff, Spruill, Stanley, Stuart, Sturtevant, Wagner and Wexton

WHEREAS, the Reverend William Franklin Graham, Jr., a renowned Christian evangelist who touched the lives of millions and transformed religious life in the United States, becoming known as "America's pastor," and who served as a trusted spiritual advisor to generations of leaders, died on February 21, 2018; and

WHEREAS, a native of Charlotte, North Carolina, William "Billy" Graham grew up on his family's dairy farm during the Great Depression, gaining a lifelong appreciation for the importance of hard work, family, and community; and

WHEREAS, raised in a devout household, Billy Graham developed his personal connection to Jesus Christ at the age of 16 after meeting the traveling Baptist evangelist Mordecai Ham and was ordained to the ministry by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1939; and

WHEREAS, Billy Graham attended Florida Bible Institute and served as a pastor at several churches in Illinois while studying at Wheaton College, where he met his future wife, Ruth; and

WHEREAS, Billy Graham was driven to share his passionate faith with others; he began preaching on the radio and became the first full-time evangelist for Youth for Christ, a missionary organization founded to serve young people and World War II veterans; and

WHEREAS, Billy Graham's work with Youth for Christ led to a series of interdenominational campaigns, called crusades, in cities throughout the United States and eventually the world; his first crusade in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1947 attracted an audience of 6,000, some of whom came forward to seek one-on-one counsel; and

WHEREAS, Billy Graham's Los Angeles crusade in 1949, 12-week London crusade in 1954, and 16-week crusade in 1957 gained him international recognition, and he ultimately held more than 400 crusades and summits in more than 185 countries and territories, bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ behind the Iron Curtain of the Soviet Union; and

WHEREAS, a media pioneer, Billy Graham's sermons were translated into 48 languages, inspiring tens of thousands of evangelists to carry the message of Jesus Christ worldwide, and he reached hundreds of millions of people around the globe through radio, television, film, books, and the Internet; he delivered his final address, My Hope America, via television on his 95th birthday in 2013; and

WHEREAS, Billy Graham was a champion for integration and was a personal friend of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., supporting the Civil Rights movement by inspiring peace, respect, and togetherness through spirituality; and

WHEREAS, Billy Graham was a trusted counselor to world leaders, including all United States presidents beginning with Harry S. Truman; he was admired for his ability to reach leaders on a personal level and strengthen their resolve to serve their communities and the nation; and

WHEREAS, Billy Graham was a voice of hope and guidance in times of national trauma, speaking after the Oklahoma City bombing; at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., after the attacks of September 11, 2001; and in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina; and

WHEREAS, Billy Graham received the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian honor of the United States, and he was listed by Gallup as one of the Ten Most Admired Men a record 61 times; and

WHEREAS, Billy Graham's memory lives on in the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, which he founded in 1950, a nonprofit organization that directs national and international ministries, including festivals, educational opportunities, and inspirational media; and

WHEREAS, predeceased by his wife, Ruth, Billy Graham will be fondly remembered and deeply missed by his children, Virginia, Anne, Ruth, William III, and Nelson, and their families, including 19 grandchildren and many great-grandchildren; and numerous other family members, friends, and people throughout the world whose lives he touched through ministry; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate of Virginia hereby note with great sadness the loss of the Reverend William Franklin Graham, Jr., a man of integrity and devotion, who supported individuals and strengthened communities through the power of faith; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of the Reverend William Franklin Graham, Jr., as an expression of the Senate of Virginia's respect for his memory.

INTRODUCED

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