

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 586

Celebrating the life of William E. Ward.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, January 14, 2019
Agreed to by the Senate, January 31, 2019

WHEREAS, William E. Ward, a trailblazing public servant who strengthened the Chesapeake community as the city's first African American mayor and the longest-serving mayor in the City of Chesapeake history, died on July 10, 2018; and

WHEREAS, a native of Central Virginia, William "Bill" E. Ward earned bachelor's and master's degrees from Virginia State University and master's and doctoral degrees from Clark University in Massachusetts; and

WHEREAS, Bill Ward pursued a 27-year career in higher education as a professor and chair of the history department at Norfolk State University, where he also served as president of the faculty senate, a member of the Council of Teacher Education, and chair of the institution's Black History Month Committee; and

WHEREAS, Bill Ward began his career in public life as a grassroots community organizer, working to bring sewer services and roads to neighborhoods in Chesapeake and Norfolk; desirous to be of further service to the community, he ran for and was elected to the Chesapeake City Council in 1978 and was subsequently elected vice mayor for two terms, from 1984 - 1986 and 1988 - 1990; and

WHEREAS, in 1990, Bill Ward was appointed as Mayor of Chesapeake to fill an unexpired term, and he won reelection to the city's highest office in 1992, 1996, and 2000; during his tenure as mayor, he worked tirelessly to achieve his vision of Chesapeake as an economic driver in Hampton Roads; and

WHEREAS, Bill Ward oversaw the expansion of several national and international companies in Chesapeake, creating countless new employment opportunities and encouraging responsible growth and development throughout the region, and he played a vital role in the creation of the Chesapeake Conference Center in Greenbrier; and

WHEREAS, Bill Ward was a trusted mentor to countless aspiring public servants and community leaders and was the president of the Educational Foundation, Inc., of The New Chesapeake Men for Progress, which provides scholarships and grants to African American students in local high schools; and

WHEREAS, a true statesman, Bill Ward used his charismatic personality and quiet professionalism to build bipartisan consensus in pursuit of a bright future for the Chesapeake community, becoming known as "the people's mayor"; and

WHEREAS, Bill Ward volunteered his wise leadership to the Virginia State University Board of Visitors, Hampton Roads Partnership, Hampton Roads Economic Development Alliance, Hampton Roads Planning District Commission, and Southeastern Public Service Authority; and

WHEREAS, Bill Ward will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his wife of more than 50 years, Rose; his children, Michael and Michelle, and their families; and numerous other family members, friends, and colleagues; 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 William E. Ward, an inspirational leader who dedicated his life to public service and left a legacy of unity to the residents of Chesapeake and Hampton Roads; 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 William E. Ward as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

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