

## SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 287

*Designating August 16, in 2019 and in each succeeding year, as the Reverend Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker Day in Virginia.*

Agreed to by the Senate, February 5, 2019

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 20, 2019

WHEREAS, the Reverend Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker of Chester, a passionate spiritual leader and a highly admired advocate for racial equality who worked directly with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., during the Civil Rights movement, was born on August 16, 1928; and

WHEREAS, born in Massachusetts, Wyatt Walker was raised in New Jersey and attended Virginia Union University; in 1953, he answered the call to the ministry as pastor of Gillfield Baptist Church, one of the oldest historically black churches in the country and the second oldest in Petersburg; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Walker led the community in protests against segregation and other injustices and served as president of the Petersburg branch of the NAACP, director of the Congress of Racial Equality, and cofounder of the Petersburg Improvement Association; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Walker subsequently served as chief of staff to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and helped establish the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in 1957, using his personal relationships with fellow clergy to build support for the organization throughout the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, in 1960, Dr. Walker moved to Atlanta, Georgia, to become executive director of the SCLC and helped bring the organization to national prominence, sparking a new phase in Civil Rights organizing; and

WHEREAS, beginning in 1967, Dr. Walker served as senior pastor of Canaan Baptist Church of Christ in Harlem, New York, where he continued to be a beacon for justice and hosted numerous leaders from African nations that were seeking independence, including Nelson Mandela of South Africa; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Walker returned to Virginia in 2004 and taught at the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University; he became a staunch advocate for charter schools as a means to support equality in education, earning the second-ever Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Charter School Alliance; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Walker died on January 23, 2018, leaving behind a legacy of civic engagement and commitment to social justice that has inspired countless others to become leaders in their communities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly designate August 16, in 2019 and in each succeeding year, as the Reverend Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker Day in Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the family of the Reverend Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference so that members of the organization may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter; and, be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the Senate post the designation of this day on the General Assembly's website.