

2021 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 601

Celebrating the life of Marvin Howard Wagner.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, January 25, 2021
Agreed to by the Senate, January 28, 2021

WHEREAS, Marvin Howard Wagner, an esteemed attorney who helped shape the drunk driving laws used by jurisdictions across the nation, died on May 23, 2020; and

WHEREAS, growing up during the height of the Great Depression, Marvin Wagner spent his first years in a tenement in Brooklyn, New York; he later became one of the first residents of the historic Williamsburg Houses, a public housing project built under the auspices of President Roosevelt's New Deal; and

WHEREAS, in his youth, Marvin Wagner selflessly took on the responsibility of supporting his mother and sister, working at a grocery store, a printing plant, a pillow factory, and a hotel through his teenager years; and

WHEREAS, in 1946, at the age of 17, Marvin Wagner enlisted with the United States Army, serving his country honorably by supporting its operations at Fort Dix and Governor's Island in New York; and

WHEREAS, with funding from the GI Bill and other scholarships, Marvin Wagner put himself through college, earning degrees from Long Island University and Brooklyn Law School; he would later receive a master's degree in law from Georgetown University; and

WHEREAS, a practicing attorney for over a half-century, Marvin Wagner started his own law firm early in his career but soon took roles in the public sector working for the town of Oyster Bay and Nassau County in New York; and

WHEREAS, while directing the highway safety department for Nassau County, Marvin Wagner became an early proponent of drunk driving laws based on blood alcohol content; his expertise would ultimately lead to a high-level position in the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, which gave him the opportunity to promote these laws around the country; and

WHEREAS, Marvin Wagner effectively advocated for laws and legal interpretations that would transform the nation's ability to combat drunk driving, including the introduction of blood alcohol content testing, which was adopted by nearly every state legislature during his tenure, the establishment of implied consent laws, and the legalization of roadblocks; and

WHEREAS, shifting his focus to juvenile justice later in his career, Marvin Wagner was twice appointed to the Virginia Commission on Youth by Governors Mark R. Warner and Timothy M. Kaine, helping to oversee the Commonwealth's implementation of youth policies and services; and

WHEREAS, a lifelong supporter of the Democratic Party both in New York and Virginia, Marvin Wagner assisted various party committees over the years and ran a close race for a seat in the Virginia House of Delegates in 1982; and

WHEREAS, Marvin Wagner will be dearly remembered and fondly missed by his loving wife of 66 years, Harriet; his children, Carole, Robert, Janet, and Steven, and their families; and numerous other family members and friends; 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 Marvin Howard Wagner, an accomplished attorney whose efforts to eliminate drunk driving on America's roadways have saved countless lives; 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 Marvin Howard Wagner as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

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