

## SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 110

*Celebrating the life of Thomas Henry Francis.*

Agreed to by the Senate, February 4, 2021

WHEREAS, Thomas Henry Francis, an honorable veteran, devoted family man, retired transportation supervisor, and beloved member of the Chesterfield County community, died on January 11, 2021; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Francis was born in New York City on September 11, 1943, the son of William Bedford Francis and Flossie Carson; he was raised in Chesterfield County, where he attended Midlothian Elementary School and graduated from Carver High School, during the period of segregation; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Francis was a first-generation college student, earning a bachelor's degree in business studies at Virginia Union University; and

WHEREAS, as a student, Thomas Francis was active in the civil rights movement, participating in sit-ins and demonstrations, including the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963, where he watched the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., deliver his "I Have a Dream" speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Francis proudly served his country as a mechanic in the United States Air Force during the Cold War; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Francis was employed as a transportation supervisor, first at Brown & Williamson in Petersburg until its closure in 2004, then at Coors Brewing in Elkton, and finally at Swift Transportation until his retirement; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Francis became a tireless force within the Chesterfield County Democratic Committee, serving in many leadership roles, including as chair, and unfailingly attending meetings, recruiting new members, volunteering to organize and set up fundraising events, and supporting the Committee's agenda; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Francis served the Democratic Party of Virginia as treasurer of the Democratic Black Caucus for over a decade, a member of the 7th Congressional District Committee, and an alternate elector for President Barack Obama in 2012; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Francis worked on many political campaigns, including the Honorable Henry L. Marsh's successful bids for mayor of Richmond and state senator for the 16th District and the Honorable Tim Kaine's campaigns for Governor and the United States Senate, as well as many other state and local candidates; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Francis had most recently served as campaign chair and chief strategist for his beloved daughter-in-law, Quanda Francis, president of Sykes Capital Management, to support her campaign for mayor of New York City; and

WHEREAS, known as "the Sign Guy," Thomas Francis was a powerhouse for grassroots organizing, participating in voter registration drives, providing rides to the polls, helping to recruit and train poll workers, setting up and manning a booth at the Chesterfield County Fair, and, most recognizably, building big signs on the back of his truck to promote candidates running for office in Chesterfield County; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Francis's utter dismay at the tragic death of Brendon Mackey, killed by celebratory gunfire at a Fourth of July celebration in Sunday Park in Chesterfield County, drove him to advocate for Brendon's Law, which took effect on July 1, 2014, to prevent such tragedies; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Francis was a devout man of faith, serving in leadership positions with the African Methodist Episcopal conference for Central Virginia and the Mid-Atlantic regions and as a member of the Board of Stewards of Hood Temple AME Church, where he worshipped and sang in the famous Hood Temple Male Chorus, which had performed for President Barack Obama at the White House; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Francis was a devoted family man, husband to Edna Francis; father to Tyrone and Todd Francis, whose accomplishments made him so proud; and loving grandfather to five bright and talented grandchildren, Sierra, Isaiah, Madison, Kennedy, and Christian Francis, who meant the world to him and whose many successes in sports, academics, and service to the community were his pride and joy; and doting great-grandfather to his first great-grandchild and namesake, Chase Henry Francis; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Francis will be remembered for his huge laugh, his infectious sense of humor, his passion for politics and campaigning, his phone calls to check in and offer advice, his next big idea (and there always was one), and his work ethic, loving kindness, and generosity of spirit; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate of Virginia hereby note with great sadness the loss of Thomas Henry

Francis, a veteran and beloved member of the Chesterfield County community who made a profound impact upon countless lives; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Thomas Henry Francis as an expression of the Senate of Virginia's respect for his memory.