

2021 SPECIAL SESSION I

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 787

Commending the Newsome House Museum and Cultural Center.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 4, 2021

Agreed to by the Senate, February 11, 2021

WHEREAS, the Newsome House Museum and Cultural Center, the restored 1899 Newport News home of J. Thomas and Mary Winfield Newsome that today operates as a museum, celebrates 30 years of exploring Black history and culture in 2021; and

WHEREAS, after the birth of their daughter, Maurice, the Newsomes moved into the saltbox house on Oak Avenue in 1906 and began to remodel it as a striking Queen Anne-style structure; and

WHEREAS, J. Thomas Newsome worked tirelessly to improve his community, primarily as an attorney who was one of the first Black lawyers to successfully argue before the Supreme Court of Virginia; he would become a popular speaker and motivator who was active in the creation of the Collis P. Huntington High School, the first high school in Newport News for Black students, and the Warwick County Colored Voters League; and

WHEREAS, when J. Thomas Newsome died in 1942, thousands attended his funeral and the courts of Newport News adjourned for the day; Mary Winfield Newsome would live to nearly 100 years of age, passing away in 1975; their daughter, Maurice, would live in the home until her death in 1977; and

WHEREAS, the house was inherited by the Newsomes' only grandchild, Mary Carolyn Derbigny Ross, who sold it to The Newsome House Foundation, Inc., a group of private citizens led by Cornelius and Carrie R. Brown who were interested in preserving the home as a memorial to the Newsomes; and

WHEREAS, the house fell into disrepair while funding was sought for the project; by the late 1980s, more than \$600,000 in federal, state, city, and private money was raised to restore the house, and in April 1990, the structure was recognized as a landmark on the National Register of Historic Places; and

WHEREAS, the refurbished Newsome House was dedicated on February 17, 1991, as a museum and cultural center; and

WHEREAS, for 30 years, the museum has offered historical exhibits, special programs, and educational resources to the residents of Newport News and beyond, teaching them about an important piece of Hampton Roads and Black history; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend the Newsome House Museum and Cultural Center on the occasion of its 30th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Crystal Sessoms, director of the Newsome House Museum and Cultural Center, as an expression of the General Assembly's appreciation for the museum's efforts to educate the public on a vital part of the Commonwealth's history.

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