

2021 SPECIAL SESSION I

ENROLLED

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 603

Celebrating the life of William Arthur Mercer.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 27, 2021

WHEREAS, William Arthur Mercer, a trailblazing veteran and a community leader in Fredericksburg, died on December 21, 2020; and

WHEREAS, William Mercer was born on April 8, 1918, to the late Charlie and Eliza Fisher Mercer of Caroline County; he was a devoted Christian from a young age and became a member of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Supply; and

WHEREAS, on February 8, 1937, William Mercer married Margaret Dorothy Childs, and the couple relocated to Fredericksburg, where they became longtime members of Shiloh Baptist Church New Site; to their union, five children were born, including their first born, William Mercer, Jr., who died in infancy; and

WHEREAS, William Mercer attended school in Caroline County and despite only completing sixth grade, he possessed great wisdom; he later joined the United States Army and served during World War II, becoming one of the first African Americans to serve as a military police officer; and

WHEREAS, William Mercer worked at the FMC Corporation Sylvania Plant in Fredericksburg, then retired from Fruit Growers Corporation in Alexandria, where he had been a forklift operator; and

WHEREAS, William Mercer was employed as a landscaper for many of the homes on upper Caroline Street; he took great pride in his own yard and received multiple compliments on its appearance and its beautiful flowers, especially his dahlias; and

WHEREAS, William Mercer enjoyed cooking and was known for his homemade biscuits; his favorite season was summer because he loved the sunshine, high temperatures, longer daylight, and sitting on his porch watching his television; though he was never an athlete, he loved and studied the game of baseball as an avid fan of the New York Yankees; and

WHEREAS, William Mercer worked hard to instill a sense of right and wrong in his children, and he was very proud that they followed his path of hard work and accomplishment, and he was proud to set a good example for not only his own children and grandchildren, but for all of their friends and the children in his neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, William Mercer loved the Mayfield neighborhood and made many contributions to his fellow residents, such as cutting grass and transporting his neighbors to voting polls, the grocery store, and church, never expecting or accepting anything in return; and

WHEREAS, William Mercer had been a member of the Mayfield Civic Association since its inception and attended the monthly meetings until he could no longer do so; in later life, he would wait patiently on the porch for his cousin Sonny Holmes to come over and relay all that had taken place within the monthly Mayfield Civic Association meetings; and

WHEREAS, William Mercer had been a proud member of the Prince Hall Masons Lodge No. 61 since 1953 and enjoyed serving the community with his fellow Masons; he loved current events and relished every opportunity to sit on the porch in his favorite chair and have engaging conversations with those who would come to visit; and

WHEREAS, throughout his life, William Mercer was affectionately known as "Dick," "Dickie," "Daddy," "Granddaddy," "Mr. Mercer," "Uncle Dick," "Wilmaffa (William Arthur)," and the infamous "Coffee"; and

WHEREAS, William Mercer was preceded in death by his wife of 63 years, Margaret Mercer; his son, O'Neal Mercer, Sr.; his grandson, O'Neal Mercer, Jr.; his siblings, Herbert Mercer and Kate B. Gray; and his daughter-in-law, Edmonia Mercer; and

WHEREAS, William Mercer will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his son, Robert "Bobby" Mercer; two daughters, Jerine McConnell and Beverly Lawson; eight grandchildren, Leslie "Fred," Celestine "Legs," Traci "Lil Rat," Angela "Big Red," Joseph "Gate Mouth," Sekou "Kou," Yolanda "Snake Eye," and Kamilah "Flim Flam"; 11 great-grandchildren, Diaunte, Bernard, Briana, Danyail, Dejaun, Nicodemus, Ny'kelle, Jahla, Lamar, Salana, and T'Yanna; 10 great-great grandchildren; a loving and devoted daughter-in-law, Mary "Big Eye"; two nieces, Sheila Gray Paige and Brenda Bernetta Robinson; four nephews, Winston Gray, John Foster, Sherman Paige, and Taft Coghill, Sr.; a special friend, Diane Washington; loving in-law, Cordelia Price; dedicated friends, Lindburgh Bundy, Emmaline Gray, and Joseph Marshall; and a host of great nieces, nephews, cousins, and other relatives; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the House of Delegates hereby note with great sadness the loss of William Arthur Mercer, a veteran of World War II who was one of the first African Americans to serve as a military

ENROLLED

HR603ER

police officer and a longtime member of the Mayfield Civic Association; 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 Arthur Mercer as an expression of the House of Delegates' respect for his memory.