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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 61

Offered January 19, 2022

Celebrating the life of the Honorable William Lunsford Person, Jr.

Patrons—Norment and Mason

WHEREAS, the Honorable William Lunsford Person, Jr., of Anaheim, California, a former judge of the Williamsburg/James City County Circuit Court, died in January 2022; and

WHEREAS, William "Bill" Person grew up in Williamsburg and attended Matthew Whaley High School, where he set the all-time record for points scored on the school's varsity basketball team; and

WHEREAS, Bill Person continued to play basketball while earning a bachelor's degree at The College of William and Mary and subsequently graduated from the University of Virginia School of Law; and

WHEREAS, Bill Person began his legal career as an assistant city attorney in Newport News, then served as the Commonwealth's Attorney for the City of Williamsburg and James City County from 1964 to 1989; and

WHEREAS, as Commonwealth's Attorney, Bill Person conducted the duties of his office with complete openness and integrity and was a mentor to many other local attorneys; and

WHEREAS, during his tenure, Bill Person prosecuted the first capital murder case after Virginia reinstituted the death penalty, resulting in a conviction that was affirmed by the Supreme Court of the United States in a 5-4 decision and became the benchmark for all capital murder cases that followed it; and

WHEREAS, Bill Person was so well regarded as a trial attorney by his peers that he was elected as president of the Commonwealth's Attorneys' Services Council and, under his leadership, the organization established its headquarters at the Marshall-Wythe School of Law at The College of William and Mary; and

WHEREAS, Bill Person also formed the law office of Person and Fairbanks which operated from 1975 until 1983 when the office of Commonwealth's Attorney became a full-time position; and

WHEREAS, in 1989, Bill Person was selected as a judge of the Williamsburg/James City County Circuit Court of the 9th Judicial Circuit of Virginia and presided over the court with great fairness and wisdom until his retirement in 1997; and

WHEREAS, during his time on the bench, Bill Person was known for his civility, patience, and good sense of humor, and he was nominated by his peers for a seat on the Virginia Supreme Court; and

WHEREAS, Bill Person was the driving force in the planning, design, and construction of the current Williamsburg-James City County Courthouse, which stands as a symbol to his foresight and leadership; and

WHEREAS, Bill Person proudly served as the master of ceremonies at the opening of the new courthouse, which was dedicated by United States Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor; and

WHEREAS, upon his retirement, Bill Person moved to Palm City, Florida, where he frequented Payson Park, a thoroughbred race horse training facility located nearby and became great friends with Bill Mott and Christophe Clement, well-known trainers, and he became such a fixture there that a plaque is affixed to the track rail where he often sat; and

WHEREAS, Bill Person was present with Bill Mott in 2010 when his horse Drosselmeyer won the Belmont Stakes and he was in attendance with Christophe Clement in 2014 when his horse Tonalist won the Belmont Stakes; and

WHEREAS, Bill Person will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his wife, Fran; his daughter, Mary, and her husband, Sean; and numerous other family members and friends; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of the Honorable William Lunsford Person, Jr., a former judge, dedicated community leader, and outstanding Virginian; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of the Honorable William Lunsford Person, Jr., as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

INTRODUCED

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