

2022 SESSION

ENROLLED

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 56

Commending Martinsville Speedway.

Agreed to by the Senate, March 9, 2022

WHEREAS, in 2022, Martinsville Speedway celebrates its 75th anniversary of providing one of the most competitive and traditional stock car racing experiences for both fans and drivers; and

WHEREAS, Martinsville Speedway was founded by Virginia native H. Clay Earles in 1947 as a half-mile dirt track built near the Norfolk Southern Railway in Martinsville in Henry County, and the first race at the racetrack hosted 9,013 fans with 750 seats ready on September 7, 1947; and

WHEREAS, Martinsville Speedway hosted the first National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR) Strictly Stock Series race, which was the precursor to the NASCAR Grand National Series and present day NASCAR Cup Series, in Virginia on September 25, 1949, when future NASCAR Hall of Famer Red Byron led 97 of 200 laps to win the race; and

WHEREAS, today, Martinsville Speedway is the only NASCAR racetrack to host NASCAR Cup Series races every year since its inception in 1949; and

WHEREAS, Bill France, Sr., NASCAR founder and inaugural NASCAR Hall of Fame class member, joined H. Clay Earles as a 50 percent partner of Martinsville Speedway in the early 1950s; and

WHEREAS, racing fans have attended Martinsville Speedway for its twice-yearly NASCAR race weekends since 1959; the track, known for its distinctive paperclip shape, was paved in 1955 and remains the shortest racetrack on the NASCAR Cup Series schedule at 0.526 miles and a width of 55 feet, with 800-foot asphalt straights and tight 588-foot concrete turns, banked at 12 degrees; and

WHEREAS, in 1964, H. Clay Earles introduced the Martinsville Speedway grandfather clock as the Martinsville Speedway race winner's trophy in Victory Lane, with Fred Lorenson as its first winner; the grandfather clock has become a historic tradition in motorsports and one of the most famous trophies in all of professional sports; and

WHEREAS, in 2017, Martinsville Speedway became the first major motorsports facility in the nation to install LED lights; the fall 2017 NASCAR Cup Series race was the first in the 70-year history of the racetrack to finish under the lights, and the first full NASCAR Cup Series race was held under the lights on June 20, 2020; and

WHEREAS, the semiannual NASCAR race weekends at Martinsville Speedway feature the NASCAR Cup Series and either the NASCAR Xfinity Series or NASCAR Camping World Truck Series and annually hosts the nation's biggest, richest, and most prestigious NASCAR Late Model Stock Car race; and

WHEREAS, in 2022, Martinsville Speedway welcomes back the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour season finale for the first time since 1991; and

WHEREAS, Martinsville Speedway founder H. Clay Earles remained chairman of the board and chief executive officer until his death on November 16, 1999, and he was recognized with the NASCAR Hall of Fame Landmark Award; his grandson, William Clay Campbell of Martinsville, was named the Martinsville Speedway president in 1988 and remains the longest serving track president in NASCAR to this day; and

WHEREAS, the 75th anniversary of Martinsville Speedway will be recognized with an exhibit sharing historic artifacts and memorabilia at the NASCAR Hall of Fame in Charlotte, North Carolina, throughout 2022; and

WHEREAS, Martinsville Speedway events attract millions of fans viewing on broadcast television and thousands of spectators to the Commonwealth year after year, many of whom stay on-site or in hotels throughout Southwest Virginia to be part of the excitement, camaraderie, and world-class racing experience; and

WHEREAS, stock car racing enthusiasts eagerly anticipate NASCAR racing at Martinsville Speedway since the historic track is one of the most popular and competitive racing venues for racing fanatics and competitors, featuring the famous Martinsville hot dog and the challenge of intense short track racing with the authentic, traditional race experience, all of which have resulted in memorable experiences for the many devotees of the sport; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate of Virginia, That Martinsville Speedway hereby be commended on the occasion of its 75th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Jim France, chairman and chief executive officer of NASCAR, Lesa Kennedy, executive vice chair of NASCAR, and Clay Campbell, president of Martinsville Speedway, as an expression of the Senate of Virginia's congratulations for its many years of offering world-class stock car racing in the

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Commonwealth and providing lasting memories for thousands of fans.