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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 809

Offered February 20, 2023

*Celebrating the life of Robert Earl Bryant.*

Patrons—Fariss; Senator: Peake

WHEREAS, Robert Earl Bryant of New Canton, who enhanced critical infrastructure in Central Virginia as the founder of the Buckingham Branch Railroad, died on May 8, 2022; and

WHEREAS, Robert "Bob" Earl Bryant was born in Arvonnia and graduated from the former Marshall District High School in Buckingham County, where he met his future wife, Annie; and

WHEREAS, at age 18, Bob Bryant began working for the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad (C&O) as a Telegraph Messenger; he rose through the ranks and ultimately became a Market Manager in Baltimore for CSX Transportation, which had acquired C&O in 1987; and

WHEREAS, after almost 35 years of service, Bob Bryant retired from CSX Transportation, then purchased 17.3 miles of soon-to-be abandoned track in Central Virginia to establish his own railroad; and

WHEREAS, Bob and Annie Bryant founded Buckingham Branch Railroad in 1988 and subsequently used state grant fund matches to rebuild and refurbish the track, now known as the Buckingham Division, which runs from Dillwyn to Bremo Bluff; Buckingham Branch Railroad operated its first train on March 6, 1989; and

WHEREAS, Bob and Annie Bryant grew the Buckingham Branch Railroad into the largest short-line railroad in the Commonwealth, a network of over 280 miles of strategic and historic trackage and 80 employees; and

WHEREAS, Bob Bryant was highly admired by his peers in the railroad industry and served as a founding member and longtime president of the Virginia Railroad Association, a fellow in the Virginia Rail Policy Institute, and a member of both the Old Dominion Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society and the C&O Historical Society; and

WHEREAS, outside of his career, Bob Bryant enjoyed gardening, farming and caring for a small herd of Angus cattle, and annually producing and bottling sorghum syrup as a gift for family friends, and neighbors; and

WHEREAS, Bob Bryant brought joy to others through his musical talents and sense of humor, and was also skilled as an inventor, always finding easier and better ways to do things, and could fix nearly anything; and

WHEREAS, Bob Bryant enjoyed fellowship and worship with the community as a member of Mt. Zion Baptist Church, where he served as a deacon; and

WHEREAS, Bob Bryant will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his beloved wife of 66 years, Annie; his children, Mark and Lois, and their families; and numerous other family members and friends; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of Robert Earl Bryant, a respected member of the Buckingham County community; 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 Robert Earl Bryant as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.