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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 263

Offered January 16, 2023

Commending Ronald D. Schmitz.

Patron—Howell

WHEREAS, Ronald D. Schmitz retired as chief investment officer at the Virginia Retirement System on January 1, 2023, after more than 11 years of dedicated service to the Commonwealth's public employees, employers, and retirees; and

WHEREAS, Ronald "Ron" Schmitz holds a master's degree in finance and marketing from Northwestern University and a bachelor's degree in finance from Western Illinois University; and

WHEREAS, prior to his public fund experience, Ron Schmitz worked for the Illinois-based Kraft Foods, where he got his start in fund management in 1982; he also served on the staff of the chief financial officer at Sears Roebuck & Co., as an industry expert on pension fund management activities, as well as employee benefits and executive compensation, and at the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, where he was managing director for a decade; and

WHEREAS, before joining the Virginia Retirement System (VRS), Ron Schmitz served as chief investment officer of the Illinois State Board of Investment and subsequently served with the Oregon Public Employees Retirement Fund, the State Accident Insurance Fund, and the cash management account for state and local governments, where he further demonstrated his investment acumen; and

WHEREAS, the VRS Board of Trustees engaged Ron Schmitz in 2011 to lead the agency's investment program as it continued to ensure an efficient portfolio from a risk and reward perspective with the target portfolio expected to generate returns within an acceptable level of risk; and

WHEREAS, Ron Schmitz led the investment team with distinction during a number of challenging financial environments, steadily guiding the system through these periods of market fluctuation while exercising calm, steady leadership; and

WHEREAS, during Ron Schmitz's tenure, the VRS Trust Fund almost doubled in size, increasing from \$51 billion in 2011 when he first arrived at the agency to more than \$100 billion as of June 30, 2021, marking a significant milestone for the fund; and

WHEREAS, under Ron Schmitz's leadership and guidance, the VRS Trust Fund experienced an outstanding fiscal year return of 27.5 percent in 2021, a fiscal year performance not seen in the past 30 years; and

WHEREAS, Ron Schmitz was instrumental in leading, challenging, and inspiring his team to provide the fund over the last 10 years with a value-add compared to the policy benchmark of more than \$10.2 billion in the portfolio, equating to \$1 billion a year coming from strong relative performance at the total fund level; and

WHEREAS, Ron Schmitz was so keenly focused on reducing fees that CEM, an international pension fund benchmarking service, calculated that in-house investment management has saved VRS \$61 million a year that would otherwise have been spent on external manager fees; and

WHEREAS, Ron Schmitz ensured that his team deploy the best execution in transactions and increases in efficiency under his leadership, having saved the agency approximately \$55 million per year; and

WHEREAS, Ron Schmitz exercised his ability to leverage his experience and expert leadership skills to develop strategies that have enabled the growth of the fund and the maximizing of investment returns, while minimizing risk; and

WHEREAS, Ron Schmitz served the Commonwealth with the utmost integrity, dedication, and distinction, and was wholly committed to the high achievement of VRS members and beneficiaries; and

WHEREAS, after more than 11 years of distinguished service to the Commonwealth, Ron Schmitz now looks forward to traveling and enjoying time with family; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Ronald D. Schmitz for his innumerable contributions to the Commonwealth on the occasion of his retirement; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Ronald D. Schmitz as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for his exemplary service to the Commonwealth, its public employees and retirees, and offers its best wishes in his future endeavors.

INTRODUCED

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