

## 2024 SESSION

ENROLLED

### HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 256

*Celebrating the life of Richard Thomas Cornwell.*

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 4, 2024  
Agreed to by the Senate, March 6, 2024

WHEREAS, Richard Thomas Cornwell, a highly admired telecommunications expert who helped reshape the industry at state and federal levels, died on July 3, 2023; and

WHEREAS, Richard "Rick" Thomas Cornwell grew up in Portsmouth, where in his youth he played drums in a rock band and enjoyed surfing; he graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School and subsequently earned a master's degree from James Madison University; and

WHEREAS, in the 1980s, Rick Cornwell began his career in telecommunications with Continental Telephone Company of Virginia (ConTel); he worked in marketing and operations in the Harrisonburg office, then relocated to Richmond in 1991 after the merger between ConTel and GTE Corporation, the largest telecommunications company merger in history at the time; and

WHEREAS, Rick Cornwell represented GTE in governmental affairs until 2000, when the company joined with Bell Atlantic to form Verizon Communications, another milestone in the industry and one of the largest business mergers in United States history; and

WHEREAS, over the course of his storied career, Rick Cornwell adapted to numerous technological changes in the telecommunications industry; when he first joined ConTel, cellular phones were a rarity and many rural areas of the Commonwealth still used party line systems managed by operators using electro-mechanical switch boards; and

WHEREAS, Rick Cornwell helped revolutionize the industry both in the Commonwealth and across the country; he was a key contributor to the passage of the federal Telecommunications Act of 1996, guided reform of state communication tax laws in the Commonwealth, and helped usher in enhanced 911 emergency systems; and

WHEREAS, Rick Cornwell encouraged market competition in telecommunications, creating new options for local telephone services and television providers, and he promoted the deployment of advanced wireless services to keep Virginians on the cutting edge of communications technology; and

WHEREAS, Rick Cornwell developed an unparalleled understanding of complex communications issues and keen instincts for the legislative process; he developed strong working relationships across party lines and built consensus to benefit all Virginians; and

WHEREAS, Rick Cornwell was respected for his honesty, humility, integrity, and attention to detail, and he was well-known in Richmond for his thoughtful sense of humor, impeccable fashion sense, and unfailing kindness; he was a trusted friend and mentor to countless government officials, state employees, and fellow communications professionals; and

WHEREAS, after his well-earned retirement from Verizon Communications as director of governmental affairs, Rick Cornwell continued to provide his wisdom and vast institutional knowledge as a consultant until the time of his passing; and

WHEREAS, Rick Cornwell will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his mother, Mary; his sisters, Mary Redmon and Marla Terry, and their families; and numerous other family members, friends, and colleagues; 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 Richard Thomas Cornwell, a respected leader in the telecommunications industry and a true Virginia gentleman; 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 Richard Thomas Cornwell as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

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