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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 115

Offered January 17, 2022

Celebrating the life of Dr. Henry Irving Willett, Jr.

Patron—Willett

WHEREAS, Dr. Henry Irving Willett, Jr., a teacher of teachers, former president of Longwood University, and lifelong learner and educator, died on November 11, 2021; and

WHEREAS, a native of Portsmouth, Henry Willett was born on June 19, 1931, to Betty and Henry Willett; he grew up with a family of teachers and followed in the footsteps of his father, who served as superintendent of Richmond Public Schools and president of Virginia Commonwealth University; and

WHEREAS, Henry Willett graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School in Richmond, earned a bachelor's degree in history from Washington and Lee University, then served his country as a member of the United States Army, stationed in Europe; and

WHEREAS, Henry Willett's legacy of service to education spanned every level and role across teaching and administration; he began his career as a sixth-grade teacher in Martinsville in 1952 and later served as the principal of several schools and the superintendent for instruction for Chesapeake Public Schools; and

WHEREAS, Henry Willett was named president of Longwood University in Farmville in 1967 and served the institution for 15 years, guiding its transformation from a teachers' college to a leading coeducational liberal arts institution; and

WHEREAS, during his tenure, Henry Willett laid the foundations for numerous achievements in academics, athletics, and the arts at Longwood University; he also led racial integration efforts and oversaw the admittance of the first male students in the 1970s; and

WHEREAS, Longwood University honored Henry Willett's contributions in 2004 by dedicating Willett Hall, the site of home basketball games for the Longwood Lancers, and the location for the 2016 Vice Presidential Debate; and

WHEREAS, Henry Willett earned his master's and doctoral degrees in education from the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia, which recognized him with its Distinguished Alumni Award in 1995; and

WHEREAS, following his presidency at Longwood University, Henry Willett served as director of George Washington University's graduate education program in Hampton Roads from 1985 to 2002, when he was named professor emeritus; and

WHEREAS, Henry Willett's legacy as an educator will live on through the hundreds of teachers, school administrators, and students that he inspired throughout his career, many of whom are currently employed in school systems across the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, Henry Willett will be fondly remembered and dearly missed by his loving wife of 60 years, Mary Turner Willett; his sons, the Honorable Rodney Willett, Scott Willett, Todd Willett, and Henry Willett, 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 Dr. Henry Irving Willett, Jr., a champion for education in the Commonwealth; 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 Dr. Henry Irving Willett, Jr., as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

INTRODUCED

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