

2022 SESSION

INTRODUCED

22107017D

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 64

Offered February 25, 2022

Commemorating the life and legacy of Robert Walter Johnson, M.D.

Patron—Maldonado

WHEREAS, Robert Walter Johnson, M.D., a respected physician, tennis coach, mentor, and founder of the American Tennis Association's Junior Development Program, was a trailblazing leader who played a pivotal role in the racial integration of American tennis and trained multiple prominent tennis champions; and

WHEREAS, a native of Norfolk, Robert Johnson attended Lincoln University, a historically Black institution in Pennsylvania, and helped lead the football team to a national championship title; he continued his education at Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Robert Johnson operated a medical practice in Lynchburg for most of his career and was one of the first Black physicians authorized to practice at Lynchburg General Hospital; and

WHEREAS, beginning in the 1940s, Robert Johnson formed an all-expenses-paid tennis camp for Black youths that was funded with his own money and held in his backyard; and

WHEREAS, Robert Johnson's Junior Development Program produced the first two Black American Grand Slam tennis champions, Althea Gibson and Arthur Ashe, as well as three other Grand Slam champions, Bobby Riggs, Pauline Betz-Addie, and Manuel Santana; and

WHEREAS, also known as "Dr. J" or "Whirlwind," Robert Johnson was a visionary leader who inspired others to achieve greatness; he was respected for his exceptional ability as a talent scout and admired for his commitment to teaching the values of perseverance, sportsmanship, patience, etiquette, humility, and hard work; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of his outstanding accomplishments, Robert Johnson was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame in Newport, Rhode Island, in July 2009; and

WHEREAS, Robert Johnson died in Lynchburg on June 28, 1971, but his impact on the sport of tennis in the United States has endured for generations and will continue to serve as a foundation for other trainers, coaches, and athletes; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That the life and legacy of Robert Walter Johnson, M.D., hereby be commemorated on the 50th anniversary of his death in 2021; 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 Walter Johnson, M.D., as an expression of the House of Delegates' admiration for his achievements.

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