

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 177

Commending Bruce Thompson.

Agreed to by the Senate, March 3, 2022
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 7, 2022

WHEREAS, Bruce Thompson, an esteemed developer, hotelier, and restaurateur whose various ventures in recent years have helped to transform Hampton Roads into the world-class tourist destination it is today, was named Person of the Year by *Virginia Business* magazine in 2021; and

WHEREAS, after working as a music promoter, farmhand, and bartender in his early years, Bruce Thompson achieved his first major success in business with his company Great Atlantic Travel; and

WHEREAS, in the early 1980s, Bruce Thompson pivoted to the hospitality industry, opening his first hotel, the Ocean House Hotel, at 31st Street and Atlantic Avenue in Virginia Beach; and

WHEREAS, Bruce Thompson developed his hotel interests under Professional Hospitality Resources while founding Gold Key, a timeshare company, along with other marketing and finance companies; and

WHEREAS, at the peak of Professional Hospitality Resources and Gold Key, it is estimated that the companies controlled more than half of the commercial bedrooms along the Virginia Beach oceanfront; and

WHEREAS, Bruce Thompson subsequently applied his skills and expertise to the restaurant trade, building an impressive portfolio of as many as 21 establishments; and

WHEREAS, Bruce Thompson sold several of his companies in the 1990s and consolidated those remaining under the banner of Gold Key | PHR in 1999, which continues to be a regional leader in the areas of hospitality and real estate development; and

WHEREAS, Bruce Thompson's vision for Virginia Beach as a top tourist destination has led to the construction of several luxury hotels along the city's oceanfront in recent years, beginning with the Hilton Virginia Beach Oceanfront hotel in 2003; and

WHEREAS, building off the success of the Oceanfront Hilton, Bruce Thompson opened Hilton Norfolk The Main in 2017 and spearheaded the development of the Cavalier Resort, a major tourism initiative on the Virginia Beach waterfront centered around the historic Cavalier Hotel; and

WHEREAS, over the past 15 years, Bruce Thompson's Gold Key | PHR has invested more than \$1 billion in Hampton Roads and the Outer Banks of North Carolina, while providing employment to more than 1,700 people in these communities; and

WHEREAS, Bruce Thompson's dedication to Virginia Beach included serving on its inaugural Resort Area Advisory Commission in the 1970s, which supported the creation of the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center, the Virginia Beach Convention Center, and the Veterans United Home Loans Amphitheater, as well as other improvements along the oceanfront boardwalk; and

WHEREAS, Bruce Thompson has served on several boards and commissions, including GO Virginia Region 5 Council, the Commonwealth's COVID-19 Business Task Force, and the Eastern Virginia Medical School Board of Visitors; and

WHEREAS, Bruce Thompson has become a major supporter and fundraiser for initiatives to improve research into and treatment of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, helping to raise more than \$20 million for various projects over the past decade; and

WHEREAS, through his commitment to excellence and his visionary leadership, Bruce Thompson has left a profound impact on Hampton Roads that will benefit residents and visitors for generations to come; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Bruce Thompson, an influential developer in the Hampton Roads region, for being named the *Virginia Business* Person of the Year; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Bruce Thompson as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for his contributions to Hampton Roads and the Commonwealth.