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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 167

Offered February 28, 2022

Celebrating the life of the Reverend Dr. Leonard N. Smith.

Patrons—Ebbin, Favola and Howell; Delegates: Bennett-Parker, Hope, Lopez, Sullivan and Torian

WHEREAS, the Reverend Dr. Leonard N. Smith, senior minister at Mount Zion Baptist Church in Arlington and an active and beloved member of the Northern Virginia community, died on February 20, 2022; and

WHEREAS, Leonard Smith was born in Baltimore and spent part of his childhood in the Washington, D.C., area, gathering spiritual wisdom from his grandmother that would guide him throughout his life; and

WHEREAS, Leonard Smith embarked upon his career as a faith leader in 1985 when he became pastor of Union Baptist Church in Gordonsville, transferring four years later to Rivermont Baptist Church in Lynchburg; and

WHEREAS, in 1991, Leonard Smith was called to lead Mount Zion Baptist Church, where he provided his congregation with enlightening and edifying spiritual counsel and many opportunities for community outreach up to his retirement on December 31, 2021; and

WHEREAS, the congregation at Mount Zion Baptist Church swelled by thousands under Leonard Smith's stewardship, while the church broadened and diversified its impact in the community through tutoring programs, food assistance, and other forms of support; and

WHEREAS, Leonard Smith took his message beyond the walls of Mount Zion Baptist Church as a chaplain with both the fire and police departments of Arlington County and as a member of various local and state boards, commissions, and civic organizations; and

WHEREAS, Leonard Smith also served as president of the Richmond Virginia Seminary from 2005 to 2008 and the Virginia Baptist State Convention from 2009 to 2012, playing an influential role in faith communities across the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, in recent years, Leonard Smith served as the chancellor of the Richmond Virginia Seminary and as special assistant to the president at Virginia University of Lynchburg and was active with the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc., and other faith organizations in myriad capacities; and

WHEREAS, Leonard Smith's educational pursuits and accomplishments in service to others over his lifetime earned him a master of divinity degree, a doctorate of ministry, and nine honorary degrees, while inspiring him in his later years to teach classes at seminaries online and to author the book *We Need to Talk: Saying What We Need to Say Without Hurting Each Other*; and

WHEREAS, Leonard Smith will be fondly remembered and dearly missed by his loving wife, Yalonda; his children, Tiffany and Phillip, and their families; his sister, Carol Murray; and numerous other family members and friends; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of the Reverend Dr. Leonard N. Smith, longtime leader of Mount Zion Baptist Church in Arlington, whose servant leadership and compassion for others were an inspiration to all who knew him; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of the Reverend Dr. Leonard N. Smith as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

INTRODUCED

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