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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 478

Offered January 14, 2025

*Celebrating the life of the Honorable William R. O'Brien.*

Patrons—Knight; Senator: DeSteph

WHEREAS, the Honorable William R. O'Brien, a star quarterback on the University of Richmond football team who went on to serve the Commonwealth as a member of the Virginia House of Delegates and a chief judge of the Virginia Beach Circuit Court, died on September 30, 2024; and

WHEREAS, a proud, lifelong resident of Virginia Beach, William R. "Buster" O'Brien's achievements as quarterback of the Princess Anne High School football team earned him a scholarship to the University of Notre Dame; and

WHEREAS, after his freshman season, Buster O'Brien transferred to the University of Richmond, where he became one of the institution's all-time greats, earning All-American, All-State, and All-Southern Conference honors over the course of his three-year career; and

WHEREAS, Buster O'Brien's 349 completions and 4,424 career passing yards both rank ninth among all University of Richmond quarterbacks, and his 83-yard air ball to wide receiver Walker Gillette remains the fourth-longest pass in program history; and

WHEREAS, Buster O'Brien and Walker Gillette led the University of Richmond Spiders to their first and only bowl game victory in the 1968 Tangerine Bowl, a 49–42 shootout against Ohio University, after which the dynamic duo were named co-most valuable players; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of his historic achievements, Buster O'Brien was inducted into the University of Richmond Athletics Hall of Fame, the Virginia High School League Hall of Fame, the Citrus Bowl Hall of Fame, the Hampton Roads Sports Hall of Fame, and the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, Buster O'Brien was drafted into the National Football League by the Denver Broncos and briefly played with the San Francisco 49ers and what are now the Washington Commanders before pursuing a law degree at The College of William & Mary in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, Buster O'Brien worked as a criminal defense attorney in Virginia Beach for more than 30 years, during which time he was also elected to the Virginia House of Delegates and represented the residents of Virginia Beach from 1980 to 1985; and

WHEREAS, Buster O'Brien introduced and supported numerous pieces of legislation to benefit his constituents and the Commonwealth as a whole, and he offered his leadership and insights to the committees on Finance, Chesapeake and Its Tributaries, Conservation and Natural Resources, and Militia and Police; and

WHEREAS, in 2004, Buster O'Brien was appointed as a judge of the Virginia Beach Circuit Court of the 2nd Judicial Circuit of Virginia and presided over the court with great fairness and wisdom for the next 15 years, including four years as chief judge; and

WHEREAS, over the course of his distinguished career, Buster O'Brien served the Commonwealth with the utmost dedication and played a unique role in the creation, defense, and enforcement of the law as a legislator, attorney, and judge; and

WHEREAS, Buster O'Brien was well known as a consummate storyteller and a caring friend who inspired others through his generosity and boundless optimism; and

WHEREAS, Buster O'Brien's proudest accomplishments were those as a loving husband and supportive father; he will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his wife of 55 years, Karen; his children, Happy, Patrick, and Erin, and their families; and numerous other family members, friends, and colleagues on both sides of the aisle; 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 the Honorable William R. O'Brien; 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 the Honorable William R. O'Brien as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.