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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 641

Offered February 11, 2025

Celebrating the life of George W. Lester II.

Patrons—Phillips, Davis, Marshall and Williams; Senator: Stanley

WHEREAS, George W. Lester II, a preeminent business leader in Martinsville and Henry County who touched countless lives as a generous philanthropist and champion for community growth, died on January 31, 2025; and

WHEREAS, George Lester grew up in Martinsville and Henry County, where his family had deep roots dating back to the 1790s; he gained an appreciation for the importance of hard work and responsibility while working in his father's company, which had been established in 1896; and

WHEREAS, George Lester graduated from Martinsville High School and finished second in his industrial engineering class at North Carolina State University; and

WHEREAS, after completing his education, George Lester rejoined the family business, then became president in the mid-1970s and set about reorganizing Lester Development Corporation as The Lester Group; and

WHEREAS, George Lester diversified The Lester Group into the manufacture of treated lumber and doors, developed wholesale and retail building material stores, bought forest land, and developed commercial, industrial, and residential real estate in Virginia, West Virginia, and North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, under George Lester's leadership, The Lester Group has become one of the largest home-grown companies in Martinsville and one of the top building supply dealers in the United States; and

WHEREAS, highly respected in the construction industry, George Lester served as chair of the National Lumber and Building Materials Dealers Association and as past president of the Independent Builders Supply Association, the Virginia Building Materials Association, and the Virginia Forestry Association; and

WHEREAS, outside of his career with The Lester Group, George Lester helped organize and served for more than 40 years on the board of directors of Carter Bank, which now maintains more than \$5 billion in assets, employs 1,000 people, and is a major lender for local homebuyers; and

WHEREAS, George Lester further supported the community as a member of the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce and the Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corporation, as well as other civic groups and organizations that enhanced the economic vitality of the region; and

WHEREAS, George Lester oversaw the renovation of the former Tultex building into the Clocktower at the Commonwealth Centre, a major local landmark, and he invigorated development in the region as a founder of JobLink, which advocated for the expansion of Interstate 73 through Martinsville; and

WHEREAS, George Lester committed \$2.5 million to fund the construction of a second YMCA in Martinsville, which will be named the Lester Family YMCA, and he created the Cap'n Til and Lottie Shelton Lester Fund at the Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia to provide financial support to small businesses, fund college scholarships, assist with transportation development, and facilitate other worthy causes; and

WHEREAS, even after his official retirement from The Lester Group in 2018, George Lester continued to play a role in guiding the company as co-chair and never stopped pursuing opportunities to enhance the overall quality of life in Martinsville and Henry County; and

WHEREAS, predeceased by two sons, George III and George IV, and one stepdaughter, Amie, George Lester will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his wife, Lee; his daughters, Elizabeth, Ann, and Sara, and their families; his stepdaughter, Tracy, and her family; and numerous other family members, friends, and colleagues; 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 George W. Lester II, a pillar of the community in Martinsville and Henry County; 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 George W. Lester II as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.