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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 379

Offered February 13, 2025

*Celebrating the life of the Honorable Walter Benjamin Keister, Sr.*

Patrons—Deeds, Diggs, Ebbin, Hackworth, Reeves and Suetterlein; Delegates: Bulova, Callsen, Cole, Cordoza, Green, Hope, Keys-Gamarra, Laufer, Lopez, Martinez, McQuinn, Orrock, Owen, Rasoul, Ward, Ware and Watts

WHEREAS, the Honorable Walter Benjamin Keister, Sr., a dedicated public servant who enhanced the quality of life in several communities in Southwest Virginia as a former mayor of the Town of Dublin and a former member of the House of Delegates, died on March 23, 2024; and

WHEREAS, Benjamin “Benny” Keister was born in Radford and was the first baby delivered at the former Radford Community Hospital; and

WHEREAS, Benny Keister earned a bachelor's degree from East Tennessee State University and a master's degree from Radford University, then pursued a career in education as a science teacher with Montgomery County Public Schools; and

WHEREAS, desirous to be of further service to the community, Benny Keister ran for and was elected to the Dublin City Council; he served in that capacity from 1986 to 1989, then was elected as mayor from 1989 to 1997; and

WHEREAS, Benny Keister next served as a member of the House of Delegates from 2000 to 2005, during which time he built bipartisan consensus and supported many pieces of legislation to benefit his district and the Commonwealth as a whole; and

WHEREAS, during his tenure as a state lawmaker, Benny Keister strove to be a voice for the rural communities of Southwest Virginia and prioritized outstanding constituent service by working directly with community members to better understand their needs and address their concerns; and

WHEREAS, Benny Keister supported regional economic development and played an important role in the establishment of the Pepsi and Gatorade bottling plants in Wytheville and James Hardie Building Products in Pulaski; and

WHEREAS, Benny Keister offered his leadership to enhance public safety as a magistrate for the Pulaski County Sheriff's Office and programs director of the New River Valley Regional Jail, and he was a life member of the Pulaski County Life Saving Crew; and

WHEREAS, in all of his endeavors, Benny Keister served his community and the Commonwealth with integrity, dignity, and the utmost dedication; and

WHEREAS, Benny Keister will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his lifelong partner, Harriet Anderson; his son, Bo, and his family; 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 Honorable Walter Benjamin Keister, Sr., an esteemed public servant in Southwest Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of the Honorable Walter Benjamin Keister, Sr., as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

INTRODUCED

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