

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 886

Commending the Virginia Association of Volunteer Rescue Squads, Inc.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, April 2, 2025

WHEREAS, for 90 years, the Virginia Association of Volunteer Rescue Squads, Inc., has advocated for and supported emergency medical services organizations throughout the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, on February 12, 1935, a meeting of interested volunteer first aid crews and rescue squads was initiated at the Hotel Roanoke by Julian Stanley Wise, founder of the Roanoke Life Saving Crew, to form an association of similar organizations; and

WHEREAS, emergency medical services (EMS) organizations from Roanoke, Viscose, Covington, Salem, Lynchburg, and the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute, now known as Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, attended this meeting and decided to name the organization the Virginia Association of Rescue Squads (VARS); and

WHEREAS, Julian Wise was elected the first president of VARS and served until the first convention on September 28, 1935, which took place at the Elks Club in Lynchburg with the Lynchburg Life Saving and First Aid Crew as hosts and a fee of 50 cents per organization; a slate of officers was approved to serve until September 26, 1936, at the next convention in Roanoke; and

WHEREAS, on May 5, 1936, the members of VARS voted on a charter and approved the organization's articles of incorporation; and

WHEREAS, in 1941, the Hunton Life Saving Crew, which was the only African American life-saving crew in the world at its inception, was admitted to VARS; in 1942, the Roanoke Junior First Aid Crew was formed, as was the YWCA First Aid and Life Saving Crew, an all-woman first aid and life-saving crew; and

WHEREAS, over the course of its history, VARS worked diligently to improve training standards and support the adoption of more modern equipment; members of the organization also began celebrating one week in May every year as Rescue Squad Week, which is now known as EMS Week in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, in 1958, VARS advocated limiting the use of the term "Rescue Squad" to only those organizations whose members held current and valid Advanced American Red Cross First Aid course certifications; and

WHEREAS, in 1968, the Virginia Ambulance Law was passed, establishing the Commonwealth's authority to regulate ambulances, verify training, and issue permits; in 1969, the Emergency Medical Services Advisory Board was created, and VARS continues to have representation on this board; and

WHEREAS, in 1975, the term "volunteer" was added to VARS by a vote of its Board of Governors, creating the name Virginia Association of Volunteer Rescue Squads; and

WHEREAS, in 1983, the One for Life law was enacted, adding one dollar to the Commonwealth's vehicle registration fee, which provided funds to localities and support for Regional EMS Councils, the Rescue Squad Assistance Fund, and EMS instructors; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Association of Volunteer Rescue Squads has been the unified voice for volunteer EMS agencies and all providers, representing the best interests of other partners in the statewide EMS system, and volunteer agencies have saved taxpayers millions of dollars through their selfless service; and

WHEREAS, the association has evolved to offer its valuable and diverse educational programs and other benefits to all providers of emergency medical services in the public, private, and commercial sectors; and

WHEREAS, volunteers are essential to the EMS system in Virginia, playing a critical role in providing emergency medical services and ensuring the safety and well-being of communities across the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That the Virginia Association of Volunteer Rescue Squads, Inc., hereby be commended on the occasion of its 90th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to representatives of the Virginia Association of Volunteer Rescue Squads, Inc., as an expression of the House of Delegates' admiration for the organization's work to educate the public and service to the numerous first responder agencies that provide emergency medical services to the residents of the Commonwealth.

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