

## HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 980

*Commending Robert Frederick Smith.*

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, October 29, 2025

WHEREAS, Robert Frederick Smith, founder, chair, and chief executive officer of Vista Equity Partners, is a distinguished investor and philanthropist who has devoted his life to creating opportunity, advancing equity, and uplifting underserved communities through his business success and philanthropic efforts; and

WHEREAS, born on December 1, 1962, in Denver, Colorado, Robert Smith was raised in a family committed to justice and education and, as an infant, he attended the 1963 March on Washington with his mother, an experience that shaped his values; in 2023, he returned to the nation's capital to speak at the 60th anniversary of that historic event; and

WHEREAS, from a young age, Robert Smith embraced persistence and service, earning a competitive internship at Bell Labs in high school, where he continued to work during college while pursuing a degree in chemical engineering from Cornell University; he later also earned a master's degree in business administration with honors from Columbia Business School; and

WHEREAS, Robert Smith began his career as an engineer, obtaining multiple patents, and went on to join Goldman Sachs, where he advised major technology firms on mergers and acquisitions before founding Vista Equity Partners in 2000, which has since become a global leader in enterprise software and technology investment; and

WHEREAS, Robert Smith's philanthropy spans education, health, the arts, and economic advancement, and through his role as founding director and president of Fund II Foundation, he supports initiatives focused on human rights, environmental conservation, music education, and expanding opportunity for underserved communities; and

WHEREAS, in 2017, Robert Smith became the first African American to sign the Giving Pledge, committing to donate the majority of his wealth; in 2019, he made headlines by paying off the student loan debt of the entire graduating class at Morehouse College, a gift he later extended to also include debt held by the parents of graduates; and

WHEREAS, Robert Smith co-founded the Student Freedom Initiative, initially funded with \$100 million, to reduce student debt burdens for science, technology, engineering, and math students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Minority Serving Institutions, and Tribal Colleges and Universities, while also co-leading the Southern Communities Initiative to drive economic development in underserved southern regions; and

WHEREAS, Robert Smith's \$20 million gift to the National Museum of African American History and Culture was the institution's largest ever from an individual at the time, reflecting his commitment to preserving Black history and culture; and

WHEREAS, in 2025, Robert Smith authored *Lead Boldly: Seven Principles from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, a book that blends Dr. King's most powerful speeches with Smith's reflections on moral leadership, justice, and service to inspire new generations to confront injustice with courage and unity; and

WHEREAS, through his life's work, Robert Smith continues to inspire future leaders to act with purpose, lead with vision, and serve with generosity in the ongoing pursuit of a more just and equitable world; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That Robert Frederick Smith hereby be commended for his transformative leadership, groundbreaking philanthropy, and unwavering commitment to equity, education, and community; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Robert Frederick Smith as an expression of the House of Delegates' admiration and gratitude for his profound contributions to society.

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