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1 SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 4

2 Offered January 14, 2026

3 *Celebrating the life of William J. Martin.*

4 Patron—Hashmi

5 WHEREAS, William J. Martin, a passionate historian who helped countless individuals engage with the
6 Commonwealth's past through his visionary leadership as the longtime director the Valentine, an esteemed
7 private museum in Richmond, died on December 28, 2025; and8 WHEREAS, William "Bill" Martin grew up in the Brandy Station community of Culpeper County and
9 began to cultivate a love of history and storytelling from a young age; he spent much of his youth searching
10 for Civil War artifacts in the area and made frequent trips to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.,
11 with his family; and12 WHEREAS, after receiving a bachelor's degree in urban studies and a master's degree in public
13 administration from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Bill Martin moved to Georgia to
14 oversee the Okefenokee Heritage Center, then worked for a museum in Jacksonville, Florida; and15 WHEREAS, in 1986, Bill Martin returned to the Commonwealth, where he led efforts to revitalize
16 Petersburg through Petersburg Main Street and Petersburg Downtown, Inc., and later became the city's
17 director of tourism; and18 WHEREAS, Bill Martin subsequently joined the Valentine as director of marketing and public affairs in
19 1994; after being named director in 1995, he worked with the board to stabilize the museum's finances and
20 operations following the closure of Valentine Riverside at Tredegar Iron Works, an unsuccessful expansion;
21 and22 WHEREAS, under Bill Martin's leadership, the Valentine launched major renovations and redeveloped
23 programming to elevate untold stories and foster public dialogue; his strategies helped the museum fulfill its
24 mission to collect, preserve, and interpret the city's history, while also growing into a dynamic community
25 resource; and26 WHEREAS, Bill Martin worked with other museums and cultural institutions in Richmond to incorporate
27 a variety of viewpoints and backgrounds in the Valentine's programs; after the 2017 Unite the Right rally in
28 Charlottesville, he launched an exhibition about the history of Richmond's Confederate monuments and asked
29 architects and planners to reimagine a more inclusive Monument Avenue; and30 WHEREAS, Bill Martin was a trusted mentor to peers in his field, and he inspired colleagues, employees,
31 and museum visitors through his empathy, sense of service, collaborative nature, intelligence, and sense of
32 humor; and33 WHEREAS, Bill Martin also relished opportunities to give walking tours throughout the city, delighting
34 visitors with tales of the people, places, and events that shaped Church Hill, Oregon Hill, Jackson Ward,
35 Court End, and other Richmond neighborhoods; and36 WHEREAS, among many awards and accolades, Bill Martin was inducted into the *Richmond Times-*
37 *Dispatch* Person of the Year Hall of Fame in 2018 and was recognized by *Style Weekly* as the Richmonder of
38 the Year in 2024; and39 WHEREAS, Bill Martin upheld the Valentine's 125-year legacy of excellence and left the institution well-
40 prepared to meet the challenges of the future and continue to enhance local life in Richmond; and41 WHEREAS, Bill Martin will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by numerous family members,
42 friends, colleagues, and patrons of the Valentine; now, therefore, be it43 RESOLVED, That the Senate of Virginia hereby note with great sadness the loss of William J. Martin, a
44 pillar of the Richmond community who reshaped the way residents and visitors engage with local history;
45 and, be it46 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to
47 the family of William J. Martin as an expression of the Senate of Virginia's respect for his memory.

INTRODUCED

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