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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 36

Offered January 14, 2026

Celebrating the life of William Bruce Rutherford, USN, Ret.

Patron—Reeves

WHEREAS, William Bruce Rutherford, USN, Ret., an honorable veteran, accomplished farmer, and beloved member of the Nelson County community, died on July 21, 2025; and

WHEREAS, a native of Cape May, New Jersey, Bruce Rutherford joined the United States Marine Corps at the age of 17 and three years later transitioned to the United States Navy, with which he would serve an additional 17 years; and

WHEREAS, over his naval career, Bruce Rutherford served on five different submarines, including the *USS Bergall*, *USS Spikefish*, *USS John Marshall*, *USS Henry L. Stimson*, and *USS Seawolf*, one of the Navy's first nuclear submarines; and

WHEREAS, Bruce Rutherford demonstrated a gift for animal husbandry during his years in the service, caring for the Marine Corps' bulldog mascot while stationed at Quantico and earning the distinction of being the first person to hatch a chicken aboard a U.S. Naval submarine; and

WHEREAS, Bruce Rutherford and his family acquired land in Nelson County in 1962 and developed the property into the "The Wonder If Farm," which was a fully functioning pig farm by the late 1970s; and

WHEREAS, after selling the farm and retiring, Bruce Rutherford remained active by building houses, running a family barbecue stand, and growing exceptional lima beans and tomatoes in his garden, which he gifted generously to friends and neighbors; and

WHEREAS, whether by wintering on Lake Okeechobee in Florida, embarking on regular fishing outings, or telling stories, Bruce Rutherford cherished spending quality time with family and loved ones; and

WHEREAS, guided throughout his life by his faith and his commitment to helping others, Bruce Rutherford enjoyed worship and fellowship with his community at Calvary Baptist Church in Nelson County and was an engaged member of the local post of the American Legion; and

WHEREAS, Bruce Rutherford will be fondly remembered and dearly missed by his loving wife, Dorothy; his children, Rob, Lorna, Tim, and Troy, and their families; 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 William Bruce Rutherford, USN, Ret., a revered member of the Nelson County community whose unwavering devotion to his family and country inspired all who knew him; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of William D. Pender, USN, Posthumous recipient of the Congressional Gold Medal.

the family of William Bruce Rutherford, USN, Ret., as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.