

2026 SESSION

ENROLLED

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 17

Celebrating the life of James Wade Gilley, Sr., Ph.D.

Agreed to by the Senate, January 15, 2026
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, January 19, 2026

WHEREAS, James Wade Gilley, Sr., Ph.D., an accomplished engineer and distinguished higher education leader who made a transformative impact on academic communities across the Commonwealth and beyond, died on July 5, 2025; and

WHEREAS, a native of Southwest Virginia, Wade Gilley graduated from Fries High School in 1957 before earning a bachelor's degree in civil engineering four years later from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, where he was a member of the football team and the Corps of Cadets; and

WHEREAS, Wade Gilley began his career with the Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company and continued his academic pursuits by acquiring both a master's degree and doctoral degree in engineering, an experience that led him to teaching and inspired him to shift his focus to higher education administration; and

WHEREAS, over his illustrious career in higher education, Wade Gilley served as president at several universities and community colleges, including Wytheville Community College, J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, Bluefield State College, Marshall University, and the University of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of his leadership and expertise, Wade Gilley was appointed to serve as the Secretary of Education in the Cabinet of Governor John Dalton and later held a number of senior administrative positions at George Mason University; and

WHEREAS, Wade Gilley made a positive and lasting difference in the communities he served both in his professional and personal life; he was active in recent years with Rotary Club International and the United Christian Parish of Reston; and

WHEREAS, Wade Gilley was a prolific writer who authored many op-ed articles and publications relating to higher education over the years, as well as books inspired by his life growing up in Southwest Virginia; and

WHEREAS, Wade Gilley will be fondly remembered and dearly missed by his loving wife of more than 63 years, Nanna; his children, Cheryl and Wade, Jr., 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 James Wade Gilley, Sr., Ph.D., a beloved member of the Reston community and influential higher education leader whose legacy of service 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 James Wade Gilley, Sr., Ph.D., as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

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