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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 88

Offered January 23, 2026

Celebrating the life of the Reverend Dr. Sylvester L. Turner.

Patrons—McQuinn and Carr; Senator: Bagby

WHEREAS, the Reverend Dr. Sylvester L. Turner, a distinguished pastor, community leader, mentor, and historian, who worked tirelessly to advance racial reconciliation and healing in Richmond over many years, died on January 11, 2026; and

WHEREAS, Sylvester Turner grew up in the Gilpin Court development of Richmond and served his country with honor and distinction as a member of the United States Air Force before returning to his hometown; and

WHEREAS, known affectionately as “Reverend Tee,” Sylvester Turner provided his congregation at Pilgrim Baptist Church in Richmond with uplifting spiritual guidance and abundant opportunities for joyful worship and community outreach; and

WHEREAS, in the early 1990s, Sylvester Turner served as the executive director of the Peter Paul Development Center, leading the organization's efforts to support the students and families of Richmond's East End; and

WHEREAS, Sylvester Turner was instrumental to the creation of the Richmond Slave Trail and led thousands of people on tours of the trail in collaboration with Hope in the Cities, an Initiatives of Change USA program; and

WHEREAS, through his involvement with Hope in the Cities, Virginians for Reconciliation, and the Baptist Ministers Conference of Richmond & Vicinity, Sylvester Turner supported a variety of programs and events and cultivated partnerships between public and private entities to promote inclusion in Richmond and Central Virginia; and

WHEREAS, Sylvester Turner pursued his mission of racial reconciliation by participating in a number of meaningful initiatives over the years, such as the Healing the Heart of America walk organized by Hope in the Cities in 1993 and the reception of the Richmond Slavery Reconciliation Statue in 2007, and he was an active participant of the Virginians for Reconciliation organization; and

WHEREAS, Sylvester Turner's commitment to justice, healing, and reconciliation culminated in his cofounding of the National Slavery Museum Foundation, now known as the Shockoe Legacy Foundation, which aims to establish a number of sites in the Shockoe Bottom district of Richmond that will recognize and commemorate the significance of the former slave market to the history of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Sylvester Turner was a generous mentor to an untold number of activists and community leaders and helped shape their understanding of present-day struggles by sharing his memories and reflections of living through the civil rights movement of the 1960s and of founding the Black Coalition of Change, an international denominational organization; and

WHEREAS, Sylvester Turner will be fondly remembered and dearly missed by numerous family members, friends, and members of the Richmond community; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of the Reverend Dr. Sylvester L. Turner, a beloved member of the Richmond community whose dedication and service made a profound and lasting impact on countless lives; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of the Reverend Dr. Sylvester L. Turner as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

INTRODUCED

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