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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 99

Offered February 11, 2026

Commending the University of Virginia School of Law.

Patrons—Surovell, Cifers, Craig, Deeds, DeSteph, Diggs, French, Hackworth, Jordan, Mulchi, Obenshain, Pillion, Reeves, Stanley and Sturtevant; Delegates: Callsen, Laufer and Sullivan

WHEREAS, the University of Virginia School of Law, the second-oldest continuously operating law school in the United States, has upheld a strong commitment to excellence in legal education for more than 200 years; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia General Assembly established the University of Virginia (UVA) in 1819, with branches of study including civil government, the law of nature and nations, and municipal law; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison took more of an active role in shaping the law curriculum at UVA than they did with any other department, most especially in seeking out and scrutinizing candidates for the first law professorship; and

WHEREAS, in April 1826, Thomas Jefferson announced the hiring of John Tayloe Lomax, a Fredericksburg lawyer, as UVA's first law professor; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Jefferson selected most of the books for UVA's original library, including the library's legal texts, and he and James Madison created a list of required readings on principles of government, including Algernon Sidney's Discourses on Government, John Locke's "An Essay Concerning the True Original, Extent and End of Civil Government," The Federalist Papers, the Virginia Resolution of 1799 against the Alien and Sedition Acts, the Declaration of Independence, and President George Washington's farewell address; and

WHEREAS, in July 1826, the UVA School of Law (UVA Law) held its first classes taught by professor John Tayloe Lomax to a student body of 26 white men; these initial law classes were likely taught in Pavilion III in the Academical Village; and

WHEREAS, since that time, UVA Law has expanded into several new homes, first to the Rotunda, then to Minor Hall, then to Clark Hall, and now to its own academical village for legal studies on UVA's North Grounds; and

WHEREAS, UVA Law opened to white women in 1920, and Elizabeth Tompkins of Richmond became the first woman to graduate from UVA Law in 1923; and

WHEREAS, Gregory Swanson, a native of Danville, desegregated UVA Law in September 1950 when he sued for and won his right to enroll as a graduate student, becoming the first Black student to attend UVA and the first Black student in the law program; and

WHEREAS, today UVA Law has graduated more than 20,000 students from a wide range of backgrounds, hailing from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, and 64 foreign countries; and

WHEREAS, UVA Law is home to a number of top-ranked student journals, including The Virginia Law Review, organized in 1913 and one of the nation's most prestigious legal journals; The Virginia Journal of International Law, which was established in 1962 and is one of the most influential journals of international law worldwide; and The Journal of Law & Politics, founded in 1983, the first and only nonpartisan publication devoted to studying intersections of law and politics; and

WHEREAS, UVA Law is perennially ranked among the top law schools in the United States, its distinguished alumni have achieved great heights in the legal profession and public service, and its esteemed faculty members are highly admired throughout the nation; and

WHEREAS, as of 2025, 177 UVA Law alumni have served in either the United States House of Representatives or the United States Senate, including 16 alumni who have served in both; hundreds of alumni have been appointed as judges, including on federal appellate courts, state supreme courts, and the International Court of Justice; and

WHEREAS, UVA Law graduates include former United States Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., former member of the United States Senate Ted Kennedy, former director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation Robert Mueller, former Puerto Rico Governor Luis Fortuño, former Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano, and numerous governors and state legislators, including scores of Virginia legislators and more than a dozen governors of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, John Lowe, a 1967 graduate of UVA Law, argued successfully for full coeducation at UVA, taking the case to court in 1969 on behalf of high school student Virginia Scott and three other women; and

WHEREAS, in 1970, Elaine Jones became the first Black woman to graduate from UVA Law and went on to become director-counsel and president of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund from 1993 to 2004, the first

58 woman to rise to the highest leadership role within the organization; she helped reshape the federal judiciary
59 and played key roles in securing passage of the Voting Rights Act Amendments of 1982, the Fair Housing
60 Act of 1988, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1988, and the Civil Rights Act of 1991; and

61 WHEREAS, Mary Sue Terry, a 1973 graduate of UVA Law who served as a member of the House of
62 Delegates and an assistant Commonwealth's attorney in Patrick County, became the first woman elected to
63 statewide office in the Commonwealth when she was elected as attorney general in 1985; and

64 WHEREAS, the UVA Law faculty is among the most cited by legal journals around the country and by
65 courts, including the Supreme Court of the United States; and

66 WHEREAS, reflecting UVA Law's emphasis on the interdisciplinary study of law, 20 resident faculty
67 members hold doctoral degrees in a variety of related fields, including economics, history, philosophy, and
68 psychology; now, therefore, be it

69 RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby
70 commend the University of Virginia School of Law on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of its first
71 classes in 1826; and, be it

72 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to
73 the University of Virginia School of Law as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the
74 institution's unparalleled contributions to the legal profession in the Commonwealth and legacy of excellence
75 in legal education.