

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 85

Commending the Honorable J. Harvie Wilkinson III.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 12, 2026
 Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 16, 2026

WHEREAS, the Honorable J. Harvie Wilkinson III, a highly admired legal educator and an esteemed jurist who has served as a judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit since 1984, received the prestigious Outstanding Virginian Award in 2026; and

WHEREAS, Harvie Wilkinson attended St. Christopher's School in Richmond and the Lawrenceville School in Lawrenceville, New Jersey; he continued his education at Yale University, where he was president of the Yale Political Union and a member of St. Anthony Hall before graduating Phi Beta Kappa and magna cum laude in 1967; and

WHEREAS, Harvie Wilkinson proudly served the Commonwealth and the nation as a company clerk in the United States Army Reserve in Charlottesville from 1968 through 1974; and

WHEREAS, in 1972, Harvie Wilkinson earned a law degree from the University of Virginia, where he was a member of the Order of the Coif and the *Virginia Law Review*; while attending law school, he ran for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, but was ultimately unsuccessful and returned to his legal education; and

WHEREAS, Harvie Wilkinson made history when he was appointed by Governor Linwood Holton as the first student to serve on the University of Virginia Board of Visitors; he was later awarded the Thomas Jefferson Medal, the highest outside award offered by the institution; and

WHEREAS, Harvie Wilkinson began his legal career in 1972 as a clerk for Justice Lewis F. Powell, Jr., of the Supreme Court of the United States; to this day, he regards Justice Powell's measured and balanced approach to his job as a model of what a judge should be; and

WHEREAS, after his clerkship, Harvie Wilkinson returned to the University of Virginia School of Law, where he was a professor from 1973 to 1978, 1981 to 1982, and 1983 to 1984; he taught federal courts, constitutional law, and criminal procedure, and he cherishes the fact that many of his students have remained lifelong friends; and

WHEREAS, in 1978, Harvie Wilkinson became editor of the *Virginian-Pilot* and was in charge of the editorial and op-ed pages; he loved the Tidewater Region and relished opportunities to provide insights on important local issues; and

WHEREAS, under Harvie Wilkinson's leadership, the newspaper opposed, on environmental grounds, an oil refinery in Portsmouth; resisted the introduction of parimutuel betting in the Commonwealth; and advocated for cooperation between Tidewater localities in securing a fresh and stable water supply; and

WHEREAS, in 1982, Harvie Wilkinson was selected by the Reagan administration to be a deputy assistant attorney general in the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice; he was subsequently appointed by President Reagan as a judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit on August 13, 1984, and he later served as the chief judge of the Fourth Circuit from 1996 to 2003; and

WHEREAS, Harvie Wilkinson's 41-year tenure on the Fourth Circuit is the longest in the history of that court, and his active service as a federal court of appeals judge is one of the longest in the history of the nation; and

WHEREAS, Harvie Wilkinson has served on the boards of the Federal Judicial Center, the James Madison Memorial Fellowship Foundation, the Virginia Historical Society, and Charlottesville's Tuesday Evening Concert Series; he is a member of the American Law Institute and one of the few federal judges to be selected as a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences; and

WHEREAS, Harvie Wilkinson is also the author of several books on political and judicial history and issues of public policy and constitutional theory; among his books are a personal memoir, *All Falling Faiths: Reflections on the Promise and Failure of the 1960s*, and a romantic novel, *Love at Deep Dusk: A Pennsylvania Story*; and

WHEREAS, the rule of law is among those topics dearest to Harvie Wilkinson's heart; he has often expressed the hope that the judicial system would serve as a beacon of ordered liberty and as an anchor of independence in the most divisive of times; and

WHEREAS, Harvie Wilkinson is proud to be a citizen of Virginia, and thankful for those who serve the Commonwealth not only in elective office but also in state agencies and on boards, commissions, and other civic organizations; he holds high the founding fathers' vision of the United States Constitution, namely that judicial respect for the democratic authority of lawmakers will be reciprocated by an earned trust in the judicial branch as a faithful instrument of law interpretation; and

WHEREAS, Harvie Wilkinson lives in Charlottesville and enjoys the love and support of his wife, Lossie, their two children, Nelson and Porter, and three grandchildren, Harvie, Jay, and Davis; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend the Honorable J. Harvie Wilkinson III, winner of the 2026 Outstanding Virginian Award, for his exceptional contributions to the Commonwealth and the United States; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Honorable J. Harvie Wilkinson III as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for his integrity, legal acumen, commitment to excellence, and deep dedication to public service.