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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 116

Offered February 19, 2026

Celebrating the life of Harlan Ray Beckley.

Patron—Deeds

WHEREAS, Harlan Ray Beckley, a distinguished professor at Washington and Lee University who inspired generations of students to develop a better understanding of poverty and inequality and seek opportunities to enhance the lives of others, died on October 21, 2025; and

WHEREAS, Harlan Beckley grew up in Illinois, where he learned the value of hard work and responsibility at a young age on his family's farm and became a lifelong fan of the Chicago Cubs; and

WHEREAS, after receiving a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Harlan Beckley earned a doctorate in Christian theological ethics from Vanderbilt University and was ordained in the United Methodist Church; and

WHEREAS, in 1974, Harlan Beckley joined the faculty of Washington and Lee University as a professor in the Department of Religion; he inspired countless young men and women over the course of his career, served as interim president of the institution in 2006–2007, and created a groundbreaking program that blended his expertise in both economics and Christian ethics, the Shepherd Program for the Interdisciplinary Study of Poverty and Human Capability; and

WHEREAS, as a professor and longtime executive director of the Shepherd Program, Harlan Beckley helped students explore the causes and consequences of poverty and inequality both in the classroom and by working directly with underserved communities until his well-earned retirement in 2017; and

WHEREAS, Harlan Beckley received numerous awards and accolades over the course of his career, including the Outstanding Faculty Award from the Virginia State Council of Higher Education; and

WHEREAS, Harlan Beckley will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his beloved wife of 54 years, Debby; his children, Benjamin, Jonathan, and Rachel, 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 Harlan Ray Beckley; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Harlan Ray Beckley as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

INTRODUCED

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