

2026 SESSION

ENROLLED

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 56

Celebrating the life of Joseph Williamson Luter III.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 26, 2026

WHEREAS, Joseph Williamson Luter III, a respected business leader who helped grow Smithfield Foods into one of the world's largest pork processors and a generous philanthropist who supported a wide range of worthy causes in the South Hampton Roads region, died on August 28, 2025; and

WHEREAS, Joseph "Joe" Luter grew up in Smithfield, where he made many fond memories hunting and fishing along the Pagan River and the James River; he began to cultivate his incomparable work ethic at a young age and secured his first job bagging groceries by embellishing his age on the job application; and

WHEREAS, after graduating from Smithfield High School, Joe Luter earned a bachelor's degree from Wake Forest University as a first-generation college student and considered pursuing a law degree until his father's untimely death led to his becoming president of the family business, Smithfield Packing Company, at only 26 years old; and

WHEREAS, Joe Luter sold Smithfield Packing Company, now known as Smithfield Foods, in 1970 and subsequently oversaw the redevelopment of the Shenandoah Valley's Bryce Resort into a year-round resort destination by researching and incorporating practices from some of the best ski resorts around the world; and

WHEREAS, by 1975, Smithfield Foods was on the verge of bankruptcy and asked Joe Luter to return as president and chief executive officer; he surrounded himself with capable individuals who could manage day-to-day operations while he focused on strategy and acquisitions, transforming the company through bold expansion and visionary vertical integration programs; and

WHEREAS, over the course of 32 years, Joe Luter grew Smithfield Foods into a \$13 billion enterprise with operations throughout North America and Europe; he revolutionized the way pork is raised, processed, and marketed worldwide while earning the respect of his employees and peers in the industry for his determination, intelligence, and commitment to excellence; and

WHEREAS, while Joe Luter was an accomplished world traveler, he never lost touch with his small-town roots, and he touched countless lives as a mentor, benefactor, servant leader, and trusted friend; he supported a wide range of projects around Smithfield, including a sports complex, a YMCA location, the Riverside Smithfield Hospital, and several museums and historical sites; and

WHEREAS, Joe Luter will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his devoted wife of 25 years, Karin; his children, Laura, Joseph IV, Leigh, and Erika, and their families; and numerous other family members, friends, and colleagues; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate of Virginia hereby note with great sadness the loss of Joseph Williamson Luter III; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Joseph Williamson Luter III as an expression of the Senate of Virginia's respect for his memory.

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