

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 237

Celebrating the life of John T. Casteen III.

Agreed to by the Senate, March 10, 2026
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 12, 2026

WHEREAS, John T. Casteen III, the distinguished president emeritus of the University of Virginia, who guided the institution into the modern age through his visionary leadership over the course of 20 years, died on March 18, 2025; and

WHEREAS, John Casteen grew up in Portsmouth and became the first member of his family to pursue higher education when he enrolled in the University of Virginia (UVA) at the age of 17; after completing multiple degrees, he briefly worked at UVA before accepting a teaching position at the University of California, Berkeley; and

WHEREAS, from 1975 to 1982, John Casteen served as dean of admissions at UVA, during which time he sought to attract top talent and laid the groundwork for merit-based scholarships for students demonstrating exceptional leadership, scholarship, and citizenship, as well as programs to provide need-based aid; and

WHEREAS, John Casteen subsequently served as the Secretary of Education under Governor Chuck Robb from 1982 to 1985, then as president of the University of Connecticut from 1985 to 1990; and

WHEREAS, in 1990, John Casteen was selected as the seventh president of UVA, beginning a transformational tenure that benefited the student body and faculty alike and enhanced the institution's global reputation; and

WHEREAS, by emphasizing the importance of private fundraising, John Casteen helped grow UVA's endowment from \$488 million to \$5.1 billion, insulating the institution from economic shifts and allowing it to continue supporting research, new academic programs, and construction; and

WHEREAS, John Casteen's own experiences as a first-generation college student influenced his commitment to making higher education more affordable and more accessible to everyone; he oversaw dramatic increases in financial aid through the AccessUVA scholarship program and developed programs to admit more women and minority students as well as international students; and

WHEREAS, under John Casteen's leadership, UVA added 20 new degree programs and created countless new opportunities for students; his passion for education was evident in that he continued teaching courses on medieval English literature, Icelandic literature, contemporary novels, the history of Venice, and higher education administration while serving as president; and

WHEREAS, John Casteen presided over significant growth of the UVA campus, with approximately 135 buildings built, rebuilt, or purchased during his presidency; and

WHEREAS, John Casteen retired as president of UVA on August 1, 2010, and was subsequently appointed by President Barack Obama as a member of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars Board of Trustees; and

WHEREAS, among many awards and accolades, John Casteen received an honorary doctorate from the University of Edinburgh for his work in global education and a Knight's Cross of the Icelandic Order of the Falcon for his contributions to cultural exchange; and

WHEREAS, John Casteen will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his wife, Betsy; his children, Elizabeth, John IV, and Lars, and their families; his stepdaughters, Alexandra and Elizabeth, 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 John T. Casteen III, esteemed president emeritus of the University of Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of John T. Casteen III as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

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