

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 112

Celebrating the life of Charles Wright Sydnor, Jr.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 9, 2026
Agreed to by the Senate, February 12, 2026

WHEREAS, Charles Wright Sydnor, Jr., a highly admired scholar who served as president of Emory & Henry University and executive director of the Virginia Holocaust Museum during his distinguished career, died on November 28, 2025; and

WHEREAS, Charles “Charlie” Wright Sydnor, Jr., was born in Jefferson, Tennessee, in 1943 and moved to the Richmond area with his family around 1950; and

WHEREAS, Charlie Sydnor graduated from Emory & Henry University in 1965 and was awarded a fellowship to study at Vanderbilt University, from which he earned master's and doctoral degrees in Holocaust history; and

WHEREAS, Charlie Sydnor pursued a career in higher education at The Ohio State University and what is now Longwood University and authored *Soldiers of Destruction: A History of the SS Death's Head Division, 1933–1945*, for which he received the 1979 James Harvey Robinson Prize from the American Historical Association; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of his breadth of knowledge on the Holocaust, Charlie Sydnor served as an expert witness for the Office of Special Investigations in the Criminal Division of the U.S. Department of Justice from 1982 to 2006 and testified in denaturalization cases against former Nazi concentration camp guards; and

WHEREAS, in the early 1980s, Charlie Sydnor also served as a special assistant and speechwriter for Governor Charles S. Robb, until he was selected as the 18th president of his alma mater, Emory & Henry University, in 1984; and

WHEREAS, during his seven-year tenure as president of Emory & Henry University, Charlie Sydnor upheld the institution's proud academic traditions and commitment to liberal arts education, guided significant restructuring and strengthening of the institution's board of trustees, launched numerous campus renovation projects, and oversaw unprecedented growth in the institution's endowment and philanthropic giving; and

WHEREAS, over the years, Charlie Sydnor served as writer, researcher, and executive producer on several television documentaries; in 1992, he became the chief executive officer of the Virginia Educational Telecommunications Corporation, now Virginia Public Media, and in 1995, he earned the Edward R. Murrow Award for his work on the World War II retrospective, *A Soldier's Day: D-Day Remembered*; and

WHEREAS, Charlie Sydnor returned to Emory & Henry University in 2006 as a fundraising officer, then ultimately accepted a position as president and executive director of the Virginia Holocaust Museum, where he proudly preserved and interpreted the stories of Holocaust survivors while teaching visitors about the dangers of hatred, prejudice, and indifference; and

WHEREAS, Charlie Sydnor touched countless lives through his commitment to excellence in education, and his eloquence, passion for history, and decisive leadership strengthened every organization and institution he served; and

WHEREAS, Charlie Sydnor will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his wife, Joanne; his children, Matthew, Daniel, Emily, and Nathaniel, and their families; and numerous other family members, friends, and colleagues; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of Charles Wright Sydnor, Jr., an esteemed historian, respected college administrator, and former executive director of the Virginia Holocaust Museum; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Charles Wright Sydnor, Jr., as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

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