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SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 2044

Offered June 18, 2026

Celebrating the life of Bernard L. Henderson, Jr.

Patron—VanValkenburg

WHEREAS, Bernard L. Henderson, Jr., a beloved member of the Richmond community who dedicated his career to government service and held high-ranking positions with several gubernatorial administrations, died on June 8, 2026; and

WHEREAS, Bernard "Bernie" Henderson graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School in Richmond and earned a bachelor's degree in political science at Old Dominion University; he also completed post-graduate programs at the University of Virginia and the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University; and

WHEREAS, Bernie Henderson was interested in politics from a young age and supported and managed a number of Democratic campaigns over the years; he would go on to serve as chair of the Henrico County Democratic Committee, secretary of the Third Congressional District Democratic Committee, and vice chair of the Seventh Congressional District Democratic Committee; and

WHEREAS, Bernie Henderson began his career in government in high school as a legislative assistant at the General Assembly, and he was a member of the staff of the Clerk of the United States House of Representatives, W. Pat Jennings, in college; and

WHEREAS, upon graduating, Bernie Henderson briefly served as an administrator of the Virginia Bureau of Insurance, then was an assistant to the commissioners of the State Corporation Commission for eight years; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of his leadership and expertise, Bernie Henderson was appointed director of the Virginia Department of Commerce by Governor Chuck Robb, then director of the Virginia Department of Health Professions by Governor Gerald Baliles, a position he was then reappointed to by Governor L. Douglas Wilder; and

WHEREAS, Bernie Henderson then worked for eight years with The Loewen Group, first by negotiating acquisitions of funeral homes and cemeteries for the company and later by managing their funeral homes and cemeteries in the Commonwealth, Maryland, and Washington, D.C.; and

WHEREAS, Bernie Henderson returned to government service when appointed Senior Deputy Secretary of the Commonwealth by Governor Mark Warner, a position he also held during Governor Tim Kaine's administration, when he also served as interim Secretary of the Commonwealth and acting Associate Chief of Staff; and

WHEREAS, after leaving government service in 2010, Bernie Henderson joined Woody Funeral Home as its director for family and community relations and became the company's president five years later; then, following the acquisition of Nelsen Funeral Home in 2017, he served as chief executive officer of all six Woody and Nelsen locations before becoming president emeritus; and

WHEREAS, in addition to gubernatorial appointments to the Virginia War Memorial Board, the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council, and the Board of Pharmacy, Bernie Henderson served his community as president of Richmond First, the Shepherd's Center of Richmond, and Jewish Family Services of Richmond and on boards of organizations such as the Virginia Holocaust Museum, the Better Business Bureau of Central Virginia, and the Capital Area Agency on Aging; and

WHEREAS, Bernie Henderson shared his wisdom and experience from a long career of public service by teaching at the University of Richmond, The College of William and Mary, the Open University of the Shepherd's Center of Richmond, and the Lifelong Learning Institute in Chesterfield; and

WHEREAS, Bernie Henderson's distinguished efforts were honored through Certificates of Recognition for public service from three governors and an array of other awards; and

WHEREAS, guided throughout his life by his faith, Bernie Henderson enjoyed worship and fellowship with his community at Grace Baptist Church of Richmond, where he served in several leadership capacities; and

WHEREAS, Bernie Henderson served as moderator of the Richmond Baptist Association and was a member of the governing body of the Baptist General Association of Virginia, serving multiple terms as chair; and

WHEREAS, Bernie Henderson will be fondly remembered and dearly missed by his loving wife of 51 years, Marie; his children, Carrie and Angela, and their families; and numerous other family members and friends; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate of Virginia hereby note with great sadness the loss of Bernard L. Henderson, Jr., a treasured member of the Richmond community whose lifetime of service will forever

59 inspire all who knew him; and, be it

60 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to
61 the family of Bernard L. Henderson, Jr., as an expression of the Senate of Virginia's respect for his memory.