

2026 SPECIAL SESSION I

ENROLLED

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 2050

Celebrating the life of Frances Aaronson Lewis.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, June 22, 2026

WHEREAS, Frances Aaronson Lewis, an accomplished businesswoman and cofounder of Best Products Company, dedicated art collector, generous philanthropist, and beloved member of the Richmond community, died on January 10, 2026; and

WHEREAS, born in Brooklyn, New York, Frances Lewis graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School in Washington, D.C., in 1938 before earning her bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan; and

WHEREAS, in 1957, Frances Lewis and her husband, Sydney, founded Best Products Company, a mail order catalog retailer based in Richmond that would grow to become a publicly traded company with more than 150 stores across the nation; and

WHEREAS, Frances Lewis was an avid art collector who maintained close friendships with many acclaimed artists over the years, which enabled her to amass an extraordinary private collection of 20th-century contemporary art; and

WHEREAS, in addition to donating more than 1,500 pieces of art to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Frances and Sydney Lewis also gave generously to support the arts program at Virginia Commonwealth University; and

WHEREAS, in 1972, Frances and Sydney Lewis gave \$9 million to the Washington and Lee University School of Law, which led to Sydney Lewis Hall and the Frances Lewis Law Center being named in their honor; and

WHEREAS, Frances Lewis devoted herself to the education of young people by serving on the Richmond City School Board, the Virginia Board of Education, and the Board of Trustees at Washington and Lee University; and

WHEREAS, Frances Lewis made an impact in her community through her involvement with committees of the Richmond Chamber of Commerce and the City of Richmond, as a trustee of the Virginia Environmental Endowment, and as a member of the Exhibitions Committee of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of her philanthropy and service, Frances Lewis was presented an honorary doctor of letters degree from Virginia Union University in 1977 and an honorary doctor of humane letters degree from Virginia Commonwealth University in 1983; and

WHEREAS, preceded in death by her husband, Sydney, Frances Lewis will be fondly remembered and dearly missed by her children, Susan, Sydney, Jr., and Andrew, and their families and by numerous other family members and friends; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the House of Delegates hereby note with great sadness the loss of Frances Aaronson Lewis, a titan of business and champion of the arts who left a profound and lasting mark on the Richmond community; 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 Frances Aaronson Lewis as an expression of the House of Delegates' respect for her memory.

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