

## 2024 SESSION

ENROLLED

### SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 129

*Celebrating the life of Priit Juho Vesilind.*

Agreed to by the Senate, March 6, 2024

WHEREAS, Priit Juho Vesilind, an honorable veteran, distinguished writer and journalist, and beloved member of the Manassas community, died on November 3, 2023; and

WHEREAS, a native of Estonia born during World War II, Priit Vesilind and his family escaped their homeland on the eve of the Soviet re-occupation, and he spent four years as a preschooler in a displaced persons camp in Geislingen, Germany, before his family ultimately settled in the town of Beaver, Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, Priit Vesilind earned a bachelor's degree in English from Colgate University in 1964, then served the country with honor and distinction as a member of the United States Navy for four years during the Vietnam War; years later, he also earned a master's degree in communications photography from Syracuse University with support from the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944; and

WHEREAS, after leaving the military, Priit Vesilind embarked upon his illustrious career as a writer and journalist by covering sports for what was then the *Atlanta Journal* and by serving as outdoor editor for the *Providence Journal*; and

WHEREAS, Priit Vesilind joined *National Geographic* in 1973 and settled in the Commonwealth, devoting three decades to the magazine and ultimately serving as the publication's adventure and expeditions editor and its European specialist; and

WHEREAS, Priit Vesilind's work with *National Geographic*, including approximately 40 features stories and many articles, took him around the world several times and to the bottom of the ocean as he researched and crafted compelling stories that would educate and enchant legions of readers; and

WHEREAS, Priit Vesilind daringly reported from inside Soviet Estonia during the later years of the Cold War, offering Americans a deeper understanding of the Baltic States at a pivotal moment in history, while cultivating a sense of hope and optimism among his fellow Estonians; he was then notably on hand reporting from Germany during the emotional dismantling of the Berlin Wall in 1989, using a sledge hammer to help knock it down; and

WHEREAS, Priit Vesilind wrote a number of books over his career, including *On Assignment U.S.A.*, which detailed the adventures of *National Geographic* writers and photographers, as well as *Lost Gold of the Republic: The Remarkable Quest for the Greatest Shipwreck Treasure of the Civil War Era* and *The Singing Revolution: How Culture Saved a Nation*, which chronicled Estonia's journey to independence from the Soviet Union; and

WHEREAS, in 2003, Priit Vesilind enjoyed the distinct honor of receiving the Order of the White Star, Third Class, from Lennart Meri, the first president of Estonia following its departure from the Soviet Union, in recognition of his contributions to the liberation of the country; and

WHEREAS, Priit Vesilind will be fondly remembered and dearly missed by his loving wife of 57 years, Rima; his children, Paul, Emili, and William, 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 Priit Juho Vesilind, a celebrated journalist and cherished member of the Manassas community who touched countless lives through his writing and good deeds; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Priit Juho Vesilind as an expression of the Senate of Virginia's respect for his memory.

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