

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 87

By Hemmer

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Ridley Wills II of Nashville.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Ridley Wills II of Nashville; and

WHEREAS, an esteemed community leader, historian, and philanthropist, Ridley Wills II was a consummate gentleman who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, a fifth-generation Nashvillian, Ridley Wills II was a 1956 graduate of Vanderbilt University, where he was a member of the varsity swim team and served as team captain; his alma mater meant everything to him, and he was always an enthusiastic supporter of Vanderbilt athletics; and

WHEREAS, a military veteran, he served as an officer in the United States Navy for two years before joining National Life and Accident Insurance Company, which was co-founded by his grandfather, Ridley Wills, Sr., in 1901; and

WHEREAS, in 1976, Mr. Wills was elected to the board of National Life, and he took his much deserved retirement from the company in 1982, having served as senior vice president; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Wills then began a new career as a historian and prolific author; he taught night school classes on local history at Belmont University and Montgomery Bell Academy and authored thirty-four historical and biographical books about Nashville, Middle Tennessee, and their notable residents; and

WHEREAS, as a testament to his efforts, Mr. Wills received an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from the University of the South in 2016; and

WHEREAS, a third-generation member of the Board of Trust for Vanderbilt University, Ridley Wills, together with his wife, Irene, supported Vanderbilt University and Vanderbilt

University Medical Center through a number of endeavors over the years, including the Wills Scholarship, to provide assistance to medical students based on financial need, and the Meade Haven MD/PhD Scholarship, established in 1977 to honor Mr. Wills's father, Jesse E. Wills; and

WHEREAS, a tireless community leader, he served as national chair of the Vanderbilt University Living Endowment Campaign; chair of the steering committee for the Vanderbilt Divinity School's endowment campaign; president of the Cumberland Museum and Science Center; president of the YMCA of Metropolitan Nashville; president of the Tennessee Historical Society; chair of the Monteagle Sunday School Assembly Endowment Corporation; chair of the Montgomery Bell Academy Board of Trust; and board member of a number of organizations, including the National Trust for Historic Preservation; and

WHEREAS, the recipient of numerous honors and accolades for his charitable work, Mr. Wills received the YMCA's President's Award, the Alexis de Tocqueville Award from the United Way, the Distinguished Alumnus award from Montgomery Bell Academy, and the Forever Tennessee Conservation Legacy Award from the Land Trust for Tennessee and was named a member of the YMCA's Southeast Region Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, Ridley Wills was an active and devout member of The Downtown Presbyterian Church in Nashville, which he served faithfully for many years as a deacon, elder, and ambassador; and

WHEREAS, deeply devoted to his family, Mr. Wills is survived by his sons, Ridley (Betsy) Wills III, Morgan (Heather) Wills, Sr., and Tom Wills; his grandchildren, Meade (Cyril) Le Lay, Ridley (Grayson) Wills IV, Isaac Wills, Jessie Wills, Morgan Wills, Jr., and Laura Jackson Wills; his brother and sister-in-law, Matt and Judy Wills; and his sister, Ellen Wills Martin; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Wills was preceded in death by his wife, Irene, and their son, Jesse Ely Wills III; and

WHEREAS, Ridley Wills II leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Ridley Wills II, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Wills.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.