

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 7136

By Lowe

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Dr. Burkett Levon Witt of Athens.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Dr. Burkett Levon Witt of Athens; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Burkett L. Witt was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional whose life of service includes a rich history with Tennessee Wesleyan University and the Athens community overall; and

WHEREAS, a member of America's greatest generation, Dr. Witt proudly served his nation as a member of the United States Navy and received an honorable discharge; and

WHEREAS, Burkett L. Witt's enduring relationship with Tennessee Wesleyan students began in 1949, when he ran Bo and Pete's Southern Soda Shop, which was affectionally called the "Slop Shop" by the students; and

WHEREAS, in 1956, he commenced his sixteen-year career on Tennessee Wesleyan's campus, serving students and being a trusted confidant for the generations of students who would go on to be leaders in the Athens community and beyond; and

WHEREAS, after the conclusion of his illustrious tenure at the university, Dr. Witt continued his service to his community as Mayor of Athens, becoming one of the first Black mayors in Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, his exemplary record of public service also encompasses thirty-three years as a member of the Athens City Council; he supported local Boy Scouts for many years by cooking his famous barbeque for annual fundraisers, and he was known for giving his time and energies to the annual Kiwanis Club Pancake Breakfast for more than twenty-five years; and

WHEREAS, Burkett L. Witt was an esteemed professional who served on the board of directors of McMinn County Savings and Loan, as well as serving on the Athens Utility Board; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to accolades, Dr. Witt received an honorary doctorate of public service degree from Tennessee Wesleyan University, which also proudly awards the Dr. Burkett and Mildred Witt Scholarship annually; in addition, the Athens City Council Chambers are appropriately named the Burkett L. Witt Council Chambers; and

WHEREAS, deeply devoted to his family, Dr. Witt always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, Burkett L. Witt enjoyed the love and companionship he shared with his wife of fifty-five years, Mildred Scott Witt, before her passing in 2000; and

WHEREAS, he was also preceded in death by his parents, Henry Witt and Mary Bell Cates Witt; brothers, Jim Witt, Olen Witt, Melvin Witt, and Robert Witt; and his sisters, Malen Witt, Mattie Witt Long, Cudella Witt, Dorothy Witt McDermott, and Helen Witt; and

WHEREAS, left to cherish his memory are his children, Harold (Linda) Witt, Gwendolyn Witt McCowan, and Brian Witt; grandchildren, Pamela McCowan Bragg, Lori McCowan (Louie) Royal, Dr. Reginald Witt, Candace Witt, Crystal Witt, and Destinee Witt; great-grandchildren, Joshua L. (Katie) Bragg, Trey (Kelsey) Royal, and Kyla Royal (Nick) Martin; great-great grandchildren, Leyonah Royal, Malakai Royal, and Stella Bragg; niece, Alice Oliver; nephews, Kenneth (Charlesetta) McDermott and Webster McDermott; and a host of great- and great-great nieces and nephews; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Burkett L. Witt 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 we should remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Dr. Burkett Levon Witt,

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 Dr. Witt.

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.