

No. R-233. House concurrent resolution in memory of former Speaker, Vermont Supreme Court Chief Justice, and U.S. Federal District Judge Franklin Swift Billings Jr.

(H.C.R.179)

Offered by: All Members of the House

Offered by: All Members of the Senate

Whereas, Judge Franklin S. Billings Jr. was truly one of the great Vermonters of the 20th century whose conscientious public service left an indelible mark on the State, and

Whereas, the son of Governor Franklin Swift Billings, he was a scion of one of Vermont's most prominent families, and his collaborative approach to legal, political, and governmental challenges won broad respect among his colleagues and the broader Vermont community, and

Whereas, Franklin Billings Jr. graduated from Harvard College and the University of Virginia School of Law, and

Whereas, during World War II he served with the British Eighth Army, was wounded severely at the Battle of Monte Cassino, requiring extensive hospitalization, and was awarded both the British Empire Medal and a U.S. Military Order of the Purple Heart, and

Whereas, while a practicing lawyer in Woodstock from 1948 to 1966, Franklin Billings Jr. served in numerous municipal positions, including as a Woodstock village trustee, selectboard member, moderator, and a zoning and school board member, and

Whereas, his distinguished career in the General Assembly began in 1949 as Assistant Secretary of the Senate, and he later served as Secretary of the Senate, and

Whereas, interspersed among his Senate roles was service as Executive Clerk to Governor Joseph Johnson and as Secretary of Civil and Military Affairs, and

Whereas, in 1960, the voters of Woodstock elected Franklin Billings Jr. as their representative to the General Assembly where he became known as one of the Young Turks who sought to bring a modern approach to legislative deliberations, and

Whereas, his fellow members recognized his enlightened leadership, and in 1963 elected him Speaker of the House and he presided over perhaps the most difficult session in the history of the General Assembly in 1965 when federally mandated reapportionment reduced the chamber from 246 to 150 Representatives, and

Whereas, notwithstanding prior service as a Hartford municipal judge, his full-time judicial career began in 1966 when Democratic Governor Hoff appointed Republican Franklin Billings Jr. to the Superior Court bench, and

Whereas, in 1975, his conscientious work at the trial court led Governor Tom Salmon to appoint Judge Billings an Associate Justice of the Vermont Supreme Court, and in 1983, Governor Richard Snelling elevated Justice Billings to the office of Chief Justice, and

Whereas, Chief Justice Billings presided for one year until President Ronald Regan appointed him to the U.S. District Court for the District of Vermont in 1984 and he served as Chief Judge from 1988 to 1991, and

Whereas, Judge Billings was a leader in many community, philanthropic, and educational organizations, including service as a trustee at the Mary Hitchcock Memorial Hospital and a founding trustee of both the Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation and the Vermont Law School, which conferred on him an honorary doctorate of law degree, and

Whereas, this widely admired member of the Bar died at 91 years of age on March 9, 2014, and his survivors include his wife of 62 years, Pauline, his children, Franklin III, Jireh, Elizabeth, and Ann, and eight grandchildren, now therefore be it

Resolved: That the General Assembly extends its most sincere condolences to the family of former Speaker, Vermont Supreme Court Chief Justice, and U.S. Federal District Judge Franklin Swift Billings Jr., and be it further

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to Polly Billings and each of their children.