

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2007

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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 1183

Sponsors: Senators Garrou; Atwater, Basnight, Bingham, Brunstetter, Clodfelter, Dalton, Dannelly, Dorsett, Foriest, Forrester, Graham, Hagan, Malone, Purcell, Rand, Stevens, and Swindell.

Referred to: Rules and Operations of the Senate.

March 22, 2007

1 A JOINT RESOLUTION HONORING THE LIFE AND MEMORY OF BENJAMIN
2 SYLVESTER "BEN" RUFFIN, JR., FORMER CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF
3 GOVERNORS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA.

4 Whereas, Benjamin Sylvester "Ben" Ruffin, Jr. was born in Durham on
5 December 11, 1941, to Catherine and Benjamin S. Ruffin; and

6 Whereas, Ben Ruffin graduated from Hillside High School in 1960 and then
7 attended North Carolina Central University, during which time he worked at a tailor
8 shop to help pay for books and learned how to alter his clothes; and

9 Whereas, Ben Ruffin received a bachelor's degree from North Carolina
10 Central University in 1964 and then later earned a master's degree from the University
11 of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; and

12 Whereas, Ben Ruffin committed himself thereafter to fight to improve the
13 housing, jobs, and education of Durham's low-income neighborhoods; and

14 Whereas, Ben Ruffin was selected by Governor Jim Hunt to be the director of
15 the North Carolina Human Relations Council in 1977 and then special assistant to
16 minority affairs in 1978; and

17 Whereas, Ben Ruffin was praised by the Honorable James B. Hunt, Jr. as
18 being "...one of the most effective leaders of our state in the last half-century. Ben's
19 death is a special loss to me. He's probably the hardest working person with whom I
20 ever worked. People said at the time he was the only person who outworked the
21 governor"; and

22 Whereas, under Ben Ruffin's leadership the number of African-American
23 judges in North Carolina increased from two to 17; and

24 Whereas, Ben Ruffin also distinguished himself in the private sector, working
25 for N.C. Mutual Life and R.J. Reynolds, and, as retired Reynolds executive Marshall
26 Bass said, his "magnetic personality," impressed all who came into contact with him;
27 and

1 Whereas, Ben Ruffin held numerous leadership posts throughout his proud
2 life, including being a member of the Board of Directors of the Research Triangle
3 Foundation of North Carolina; and

4 Whereas, Ben Ruffin was appointed to the Board of Governors of The
5 University of North Carolina in 1991 and in 1998 was elected to be the chair of that
6 board; and

7 Whereas, Ben Ruffin holds the distinction of being the first
8 African-American chair of the Board of Governors; and

9 Whereas, Ben Ruffin strove to promote public education within the State, and
10 his work as chair of the Board of Governors "will positively impact the lives of the
11 people of North Carolina for generations to come"; and

12 Whereas, Ben Ruffin, as the Honorable Jim Hunt acknowledged, "...worked
13 tirelessly to see that everyone could be a part of the North Carolina dream"; and

14 Whereas, Ben Ruffin was to all who worked with him and knew him, "the
15 personification of intelligence, commitment and compassion"; and

16 Whereas, Ben Ruffin received honorary degrees from North Carolina Central
17 University and North Carolina A&T University in recognition of his lifework; and

18 Whereas, Ben Ruffin was the recipient of the NAACP Kelly M. Alexander
19 Humanitarian Award, the Donald H. McGannon Citation by the National Urban League,
20 the North Carolina Association of Black County Officials Frederick Douglas Leadership
21 Award, and the Blackbook Award by Dollars and Sense magazine; and

22 Whereas, Ben Ruffin was a Life and Golden Heritage member of the
23 NAACP, a Prince Hall Mason, and former pole march of the Winston-Salem Chapter of
24 Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity; and

25 Whereas, Ben was an active member of Emmanuel Baptist Church and served
26 as a Sunday school teacher and usher; and

27 Whereas, Ben Ruffin remained committed to the North Carolina Public
28 University system after stepping down as its chair and remained filled with such zeal
29 until his final moments; and

30 Whereas, Ben Ruffin died on December 7, 2006, at the age of 64; and

31 Whereas, Ben Ruffin is survived by his wife, Avon, and his two daughters,
32 April and her husband Fred Adams, and Benita; Now, therefore,
33 Be it resolved by the Senate, the House of Representatives concurring:

34 **SECTION 1.** The General Assembly honors the memory of Benjamin
35 Sylvester Ruffin, Jr. and expresses the appreciation of this State and its citizens for his
36 life and service.

37 **SECTION 2.** The General Assembly extends its deepest sympathy to the
38 family and friends of Benjamin Sylvester Ruffin, Jr. and mourns the loss of this man
39 and devoted public servant.

40 **SECTION 3.** The Secretary of State shall send a certified copy of this
41 resolution to the family of Benjamin Sylvester Ruffin, Jr.

42 **SECTION 4.** This resolution is effective upon ratification.