

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 391

Commending George Chancellor Rawlings, Jr.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 13, 1997

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 21, 1997

WHEREAS, George Chancellor Rawlings, Jr., was born of an historic Virginia family and tradition on November 7, 1921, in Fredericksburg, Virginia; and

WHEREAS, George Rawlings was educated at Randolph-Macon College, where he received a B.A. in 1942, and at the University of Virginia School of Law, from which he graduated in 1947; and

WHEREAS, George Rawlings' desire for progress in Virginia led him to manage John F. Kennedy's Fredericksburg campaign in 1960 and to support Lyndon Johnson in 1964; and

WHEREAS, George Rawlings served with distinction in the Virginia House of Delegates, to which he was elected in 1963, and reelected in 1965 and 1967; and

WHEREAS, George Rawlings led a drive for minority voter registration and the involvement of black voters in the democratic process; and

WHEREAS, George Rawlings ran as the Democratic candidate for the United States House of Representatives in 1966 and the United States Senate in 1970; and

WHEREAS, George Rawlings also served with distinction as a member of the Virginia Jaycees, serving as its president in 1954; as a substitute trial justice in Spotsylvania County from 1950 to 1963; as president of the Fredericksburg Mental Health Association; and as president of the Fredericksburg area Bar Association; and

WHEREAS, George Rawlings also was elected as a member of the Democratic National Committee, serving from 1972 to 1980; as Chairman of the Eighth District Democratic Committee, serving from 1981 to 1993; and as an elector for the Eighth Congressional District in 1996; and

WHEREAS, George Rawlings was appointed to the George Mason University Board of Visitors by Governor Wilder, serving from 1992 to 1996; and

WHEREAS, George Rawlings was presented, in 1993, the Outstanding Democrat Award by the Fairfax County Democratic Committee; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Virginia General Assembly recognize George Chancellor Rawlings, Jr., for his outstanding contributions as a member of the House of Delegates and as a citizen of Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to George Chancellor Rawlings, Jr., in grateful appreciation of his years of service to the Commonwealth of Virginia.

GEORGE CHANCELLOR RAWLINGS, JR.
Statement of the Eight District Democratic Committee

Few have had as powerful and lasting effect on the Commonwealth of Virginia as George Chancellor Rawlings, Jr.

George was born of an historic Virginia family and tradition, educated at Randolph Macon College, and graduated from the University of Virginia Law School. His strong desire for progress in Virginia led him to manage John F. Kennedy's statewide campaign in 1960, and to buck the Byrd Machine by persuading the State Party to endorse Lyndon Johnson in 1964. He won election to the House of Delegates in 1963 and reelection in 1965 and 1967.

In the 1966 Democratic primary, he shocked the political establishment by challenging the 36-year veteran of the U.S. House of Representatives, Judge Howard Smith. As the forbiddingly powerful Chairman of the Rules Committee, Smith succeeded in blocking civil rights and other progressive legislation. Thanks to George and his victory, which drew national attention, this dam against progress was breeched. Important civil rights and other legislation was brought to the full House, passed by Congress, and signed into law by President Johnson.

George's courageous actions were punished by defeat that fall when Judge Smith and the Byrd Machine joined forces with Republicans. Another defeat followed in 1969 when right-wing forces targeted his House of Delegates seat. In 1970 he ran against Harry Byrd, Jr. for the U.S. Senate and lost in a three-way race when Byrd defected from the Democratic Party and ran as an independent.

George then led a drive for minority voter registration and the involvement of African-American voters in the Democratic process, resulting in progressives taking control of the 1972 State Central Committee. That year, he was elected to the Democratic National Committee where he ardently advocated party reform during the next eight years. From 1981 to 1993, he served as the vigorous chairman of the Eighth District Democratic Committee. His tenure helped bring the 1990 election of Democrat Jim Moran over the 8th CD's Republican incumbent.

"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy." Through all his years of public service, George measured up to those words of Martin Luther King, Jr., refusing to compromise in the face of threats and setbacks. His dedication has earned him great honor and our deep gratitude.

**A TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF
THE HONORABLE GEORGE CHANCELLOR RAWLINGS, JR.
OFFERED DURING HIS MEMORIAL SERVICE AT
MASSAPONAX BAPTIST CHURCH OF FREDERICKSBURG,
VIRGINIA
APRIL 26, 2009**

I became friends with George Rawlings in 1965, when I was President of the Teenage Democratic Clubs of Virginia. I spent many weekends as a volunteer in his historic 1966 congressional campaign. Later, we served together on the Democratic State Central Committee for several years. Our most recent contact was a delightful telephone call I received from him a few weeks before the November election.

In the mid-1960s, except for a few old bankers and the Maytag repair man, George might have been the only person in the world to always wear a bowtie. I never asked him why, probably because by the time I mustered the courage to ask such a personal and impertinent question, I knew it was an outward manifestation of a guy who was just determined to be the way he felt he should be, regardless of what everyone else was doing or thinking. Simply put, his bowties were emblematic of his whole being.

The understatement of this day is that George never even considered conforming to what others considered to be conventional; he had his principles, he was deeply committed to them and he was absolutely intrepid in the application of those principles. Just as he didn't care if he was the only one wearing a bowtie, he also wasn't cowed one bit to be just about the only member of the House of Delegates fighting to repeal the poll tax so all citizens could vote; or advocating a minimum wage so the hardest working Virginians doing the most difficult jobs would be able to provide for the basic needs of themselves and their families; or providing free text books for public school children so all students, regardless of their family economic status, would have the same opportunity to learn; or making mental health facilities more like modern hospitals than medieval dungeons and debtors prisons. He was an early and usually a lonely advocate for these and so many other things that folks today cannot imagine could possibly have been controversial, much less radical. But these were the very things that caused Virginia's political establishment to regard George as dangerously liberal.

Some so-called political experts might look at George's political career and declare it to have been unsuccessful; he lost a few elections and there is no legislation called the Rawlings Act, but those experts expose their own lack of expertise by such an assessment. George's political career is a vivid example of the fact that a person doesn't necessarily lose just because he doesn't get enough votes to win an election, nor does a person necessarily lose just because his bills don't pass; a person loses only when he stops caring enough to fight for what he believes in. George always cared; George always spoke out; George always fought for his principles; and because of that, so many

things that George advocated and told us we needed to do decades ago have been achieved or are works in progress.

When the political history of 20th century Virginia is written, there will be clear distinctions between those in public life who pandered to the fears and prejudices of the moment, those who were too timid to say and do what they knew needed to be done, and those brave few who were described so well by Senator Ted Kennedy in his eulogy to his brother, Senator Robert Kennedy, with these words:

Few are willing to brave the disapproval of their fellows, the censure of their colleagues, the wrath of their society. Moral courage is a rarer commodity than bravery in battle or great intelligence. Yet it is the one essential, vital quality for those who seek to change a world that yields most painfully to change.

At any given time we have many politicians and just a few statesmen in office. At one end of that spectrum there are politicians who are quite successful at winning elections, but when they leave office they also leave a blank page of meaningful accomplishments. Then toward the opposite end of that spectrum there are statesmen. They are politicians who take a calculated risk to accomplish something meaningful; they are the ones most likely to get parks and bridges named in their honor. But there is a rare category of politician, almost off the spectrum, one so small that we usually overlook its existence, and we don't always have them among us; these are the political prophets. These are the men and women who willingly take the long, muddy, narrow, bumpy and difficult road at the risk of their own personal political success to boldly, forthrightly and uncompromisingly pursue their convictions of justice, equality, truth and human dignity, usually at their own peril, in order to meaningfully address the most significant needs of society.

The Honorable George Chancellor Rawlings, Jr. will always be one of the Commonwealth of Virginia's greatest political prophets. I am sincerely thankful that God gave George to Virginia and that he gave me the privilege of being one of George's friends.

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From: Bob Hull

Sent: Sunday, April 26, 2009 10:08 PM

Subject: George Rawlings' memorial service

I attended George Rawlings' memorial service today. It was very nice. It was in a small Baptist church in Massaponnax, just south of Fredericksburg. There were not many pews, but everyone had a place to sit. George was cremated and his remains were in a box in front of the pulpit with a vase of flowers on top of it.

The presiding minister was the past pastor of that church, Reverend John Edmonds. He was very good as he knew George and the family. After opening remarks, he gave an invocation. We then sang "Amazing Grace." This was followed by remembrances.

State Senator Edd Houck was there with his wife and he gave the first remembrance. He talked about how George always fought for the little guy. Then, Deputy Secretary of the Commonwealth Bernie Henderson spoke. He had worked for George in campaigns in the 1960s and he gave a great eulogy. Next, George's brother, Richard, spoke while standing in the aisle next to the front pew.

He asked anyone else who wanted to speak to come forward. Several people who knew George from the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County area made spontaneous remarks. Then, Janet Carver, who was there with her husband, and former 8th District Congressman Herb Harris came forward to speak. Rob Surovell spoke spontaneously from his seat. George's caretaker also spoke movingly from the pulpit.

Among those also in attendance were former U.S. Senator Chuck Robb and his wife, Linda, and Secretary of the Commonwealth Kate Hanley. Delegates Jim Scott, Adam Ebbin, and Mark Sickles were also present. Eighth District Democratic Committee chair Margo Horner was there and Democratic State Central Committee members Mame Reiley and Frank Leone was also present.

Former 11th Congressional District Chair Dan Alcorn was there, too. Hunter Mill Supervisor Cathy Hudgins, former chair of the Fairfax County Democratic Committee, was also present. I also saw Ben Mays, now of Loudoun County.

After everyone else spoke from the pulpit, Richard Rawlings spoke, again from the aisle by the front pew. He sounds just like George and he resembles him, too. He talked about George's early life and about how George wanted to enlist in the Army during World War II. He was rejected because he was too big and heavy. So, he lost weight, but they found and removed a tumor on his arm and that kept him from being accepted by the Army.

Richard also spoke about the great things that George did as an adult and read from a resolution that we approved in the General Assembly in 1997 about George. He said that there were two words that George always used: thank you. He said that George would always say thank you when someone helped him, as he did for his brother in his last days, no matter how many times he did so in the course of a visit.

Richard urged everyone to remember to say those words to people and he expressed his belief that by doing so, the world would be a better place. He concluded his remarks by turning towards the box of ashes and saying, "Thank you, brother." His words were quite touching.

The new minister at the church next read from scripture and gave a prayer. We then sang a bouncy hymn with which I was not familiar. Reverend Edmonds then made closing remarks. Finally, Bernie Henderson presented George's brother with a Virginia flag flown over the Capitol and said that it was given in the name of Governor Tim Kaine on behalf of the people of the Commonwealth of Virginia. That was a truly moving moment.

Reverend Edmonds then gave a benediction and invited people to the fellowship hall for refreshments. On the way towards the front to the fellowship hall, many of us stopped several photographs of George that were placed in front of the church facing the people.

One photograph showed him shaking hands with President Lyndon Johnson. Another showed him shaking hands with President Jimmy Carter with Mary Cahill by his side. A young Mary was also shown in a photograph with George and George's son, Chase. There was also a photograph of Chase and his brother, both of whom passed away as young adults from cystic fibrosis.

Afterwards, in the fellowship hall, there was a lot of talking and visiting with old friends who had not seen each other in years. In the remembrances and afterwards, there was much talk of George beating Howard Smith in the 1966 Democratic primary and of George scaring Harry Byrd, Jr. from running for re-election as a Democrat and switching to an Independent for fear of George beating him in a primary, as well as the battles in his six years in the House of Delegates against the poll tax and other repressive laws.

All in all, it was a wonderful service on a bright spring day.

Delegate Bob Hull