

A CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION

25-172

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

February 6, 2024

To recognize, honor, and celebrate the late Dr. Brent Blackwelder for his service to the District of Columbia as one of its earliest, most successful environmental advocates who helped put the city on an aggressive course to address the climate crisis and environmental challenges District residents face.

WHEREAS, Dr. Brent Blackwelder was born in 1943 in Buffalo, New York to Evelyn Hellen and the Reverend Francis Blackwelder;

WHEREAS, in 1948 the Blackwelder family moved to the District of Columbia where Dr. Blackwelder attended John Eaton Elementary School and St. Albans School;

WHEREAS, Dr. Blackwelder graduated from Duke University summa cum laude in 1964 and earned a Master of Arts in mathematics from Yale University and a PhD in philosophy from the University of Maryland;

WHEREAS, Dr. Blackwelder stated that his purpose in life was “to improve the health and environmental protections in DC, the United States, and also internationally with global treaties to safeguard the Earth’s atmosphere”;

WHEREAS, for his efforts Dr. Blackwelder has been proclaimed an icon in the United States environmental movement, and a true champion for rivers;

WHEREAS, Dr. Blackwelder believed that the District of Columbia should be a shining example for cities and states working to create a healthier and more just urban environment;

WHEREAS, Dr. Blackwelder, working with The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation and other DC environmental leaders, created the DC Environmental Network to channel the knowledge and expertise of national and environmental organizations based in the District of Columbia toward the betterment of the District;

WHEREAS, Dr. Blackwelder committed Friends of the Earth to coordinate, house, and dedicate its staff and his time to make the DC Environmental Network a reality;

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WHEREAS, the DC Environmental Network has been protecting the environmental interests in DC for 28 years;

WHEREAS, Dr. Blackwelder's warmth and mentorship offered support to other environmental activists;

WHEREAS, Dr. Blackwelder, as a member of Mayor Vincent Gray's Green Ribbon Committee, contributed to the development of the District's first Sustainable DC Plan;

WHEREAS, Dr. Blackwelder shared his strategic campaign and communications wisdom while hosting the Coalition for Smarter Growth's monthly meetings for the first 5 years after its founding in 1997;

WHEREAS, Dr. Blackwelder brought together community conservation groups and legal advocates in his pioneering of grassroots access to the courts and lawmakers to build toward their shared environmental justice goals;

WHEREAS, Dr. Blackwelder led Friends of the Earth in groundbreaking litigation under the Clean Water Act to restore the Anacostia River into a waterway that the District can once again enjoy for fishing, swimming, and recreation;

WHEREAS, Dr. Blackwelder served with distinction on the board of directors for Potomac Riverkeeper Network from 2009 through 2022;

WHEREAS, Potomac Riverkeeper Network successfully challenged Dominion Energy's leaking coal ash pits at Possum Point, compelling the Virginia General Assembly to pass legislation requiring Dominion to clean up the point in 2019;

WHEREAS, Dr. Blackwelder was a prominent and effective advocate for global environmental protection for nearly 5 decades, testifying to Congress more than 100 times;

WHEREAS, Dr. Blackwelder helped found and served as first Board Chair of the American Rivers Conservation Council, dedicated to protecting and preserving the remaining free-flowing rivers in the United States, headquartered here in Washington DC;

WHEREAS, Dr. Blackwelder's exuberant love of nature was reflected in his annual Spring wildflower walks at Carderock that he led for St. Columba's Episcopal Church;

WHEREAS, Dr. Blackwelder's more than 50 years of service to the local, national, and global environmental movement has improved the lives of millions of people while protecting rivers, species, ecosystems, and public health;

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WHEREAS, Dr. Blackwelder’s charge to us, stated in a 1997 profile, is to “keep up the fight for justice and a healthy planet”; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Blackwelder passed away on November 23, 2023.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the “Dr. Brent Blackwelder Posthumous Recognition Resolution of 2024”.

Sec. 2. The Council of the District of Columbia recognizes, honors, and celebrates Dr. Brent Blackwelder for his exemplary service to the District of Columbia and its residents as one of its most impactful local environmental advocates.

Sec. 3. This resolution shall take effect immediately.