

2011 -- S 0813

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2011

SENATE RESOLUTION

EXPRESSING OUR DEEPEST SYMPATHIES ON THE PASSING OF ELMER E.  
CORNWELL, JR.

Introduced By: Senator Louis P. DiPalma

Date Introduced: March 30, 2011

Referred To: Placed on the Senate Consent Calendar

1 WHEREAS, It is with sadness and regret that we have learned of the passing of Elmer E.  
2 Cornwell, Jr., a dedicated family man and educator, long-time resident of the Town of Little  
3 Compton, and the well-respected former Parliamentarian for the Rhode Island House of  
4 Representatives; and

5 WHEREAS, Born in Holyoke, Massachusetts, to the late Elmer and Eloise Cornwell, Mr.  
6 Cornwell was valedictorian of the 1942 graduating class at Holyoke High School. After  
7 completing freshman year at college, he was drafted, and served his country with honor as a Navy  
8 Seabee until 1946, when he returned to Williams College and attained his Bachelor's degree,  
9 Magna Cum Laude; and

10 WHEREAS, Upon graduation, Mr. Cornwell continued his association with Williams  
11 College as an instructor in Political Science. In 1949, he entered the graduate program at Harvard  
12 University, where he received his Master's degree in 1951 and his Doctor of Philosophy degree in  
13 Government in 1953; and

14 WHEREAS, Later in 1953, Mr. Cornwell took a position as an instructor at Princeton  
15 University until 1960, when he became an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Brown  
16 University. Soon thereafter, he was promoted to Associate Professor in 1955, full Professor in  
17 1964, and Chairperson of the Political Science Department in 1962. He retired in 2005; and

18 WHEREAS, In 1977, Mr. Cornwell was asked to serve as Parliamentarian for the Rhode  
19 Island House of Representatives, a position he held for the next seventeen years, until becoming

1 an Aide to the Speaker of the House; and

2 WHEREAS, Mr. Cornwell also served the Town of Little Compton in many capacities.  
3 He was the Moderator for the Town of Little Compton for many years, and was a member of and  
4 served as deacon and moderator at the United Congregational Church of Little Compton; and

5 WHEREAS, An expert on Home Rule Charters, Mr. Cornwell served as consultant to the  
6 charter revision commissions in many cities and towns. He also served as Research Director at  
7 the Constitutional Conventions of 1964 through 1968, and again in 1973, and was an alternate  
8 delegate to the Democratic National Conventions of 1960 and 1964; and

9 WHEREAS, Over the course of his distinguished lifetime, Mr. Cornwell was recognized  
10 with a plethora of awards and honors. He authored numerous books and articles, winning the  
11 Frank Luther Mott Prize for his book, Presidential Leadership of Public Opinion. He also  
12 established the Elmer E. Cornwell, Jr., Fellowship Fund at Brown University in 2008; and

13 WHEREAS, Mr. Cornwell was the husband of Laura J. “Penny” Walker, the father of  
14 Joan Bohl, Leila Cornwell, and the late Alison Cornwell, and the step-father of Jamie Greene and  
15 spouse, Theodore, Dawn Nickerson and spouse, Chris Douris, and Robert Walker and partner,  
16 Olivia Iglesias. He was also the grandfather of Courtney Bohl, Melissa Fontaine, Paige Greene,  
17 and Kyle Greene; and

18 WHEREAS, Admired by everyone who knew him, Elmer Cornwell was a friend and  
19 mentor to all who sought his guidance, advice, and words of wisdom. He was a well-respected  
20 and familiar face on the floor of the House for many years, and he will be greatly missed; now,  
21 therefore be it

22 RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
23 hereby expresses our deepest sympathies on the passing of Elmer Cornwell, Jr.; and be it further

24 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and he hereby is authorized and directed to  
25 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to Laura J. Walker and Family.

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