

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 349

By Leatherwood

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Estel Ray Mills.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were saddened to learn of the passing of Mr. Estel Ray Mills, a longtime educator who had served as a teacher, principal, superintendent, and administrator and whose passion was educating young people; and

WHEREAS, a native of Michie, Mr. Mills was a graduate of Michie High School and earned his bachelor's degree in chemistry from the University of Memphis; and

WHEREAS, he then briefly taught at Michie High School before serving in the U.S. Army during the Korean War; upon his return, he taught science classes at Ramer High School and earned his master's degree from the University of Memphis; and

WHEREAS, in 1964, Mr. Mills accepted the post of principal at Middleton School, and then in 1968, he began an eleven-year tenure as principal of Hardin County High School in Savannah; and

WHEREAS, in 1979, he became the superintendent of McNairy County Schools, in which position he led the way in a historic school construction/renovation program and the formal accreditation of each McNairy County school; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Mills served a four-year term as Assistant Commissioner of Education for the State of Tennessee from 1987-1991, working in Nashville during the week but returning to his beloved family farm in Michie every weekend; and

WHEREAS, a member of the board for the Pickwick Electric Cooperative after his retirement from education, Mr. Mills was far from idle during his golden years, as he improved and maintained the family orchards, walnut groves, and berry fields; and

WHEREAS, while teaching at Ramer High School as a young man, Estel Mills began dating Mary Ruth Holt, the first-grade teacher at Ramer; they were happily united in marriage for sixty-one years, until her passing in 2017; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Mills expressed his faith as a member of First Baptist Church Michie; he was previously a member of Selmer First Baptist Church, where he taught a men's Sunday School class; and

WHEREAS, a loving and gentle family man, Mr. Mills centered his life around God, family, and education and believed strongly in the importance of hard work; he once taught his children this value by having each of them pick an entire bale of cotton, a three-week endeavor, before having the rest of the crop harvested by machine, to their great relief; and

WHEREAS, Estel Ray Mills is survived by two daughters and two sons, Donna Mills Hasty (Tim), Nelson Mills (Judy), Kevin Mills, and Melissa Mills Leatherwood (Tom); thirteen grandchildren, Austin Mills (Emily), Laura Beth Mills Jones (Brad), Erin Hasty Joehnk (Marc), Morgan Mills Zurawski (Martin), Catherine Hasty Beck (Jerry), Erica Mills and fiancé James Greer, Sarah Hasty, Hayley Mills Vandiver (Blake), Celia Leatherwood Noble (Aaron), Hannah Leatherwood, Amanda Leatherwood, MaryKate Leatherwood, and Zoe Leatherwood; ten great-grandchildren, Mary Carlyle Mills, Libby Mills, Mary Corbin Beck, Sanders Beck, Heidi Joehnk, Marianna Jones, Emma Kate Vandiver, Callie Grace Beck, Zara Zurawski, and Mitchell Jones; sisters-in-law, Patsy Mills, Martha Holt, and Linda Stewart; brother-in-law, William Hoskins; and several cousins who always kept in touch. "Uncle Mac" is also survived by many cherished nieces and nephews; and

WHEREAS, he was preceded in death by his wife, Mary Ruth Holt Mills; his parents, Julius T. and Evelyn Moore Mills; his siblings, Virginia Hoskins and Eldon Mills; and brothers-in-law, Ray Holt and Bobby Stewart; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Mills believed that "one's influence on others is one's greatest responsibility"; he brought honesty and integrity to each of his endeavors and served as an exemplary role model for the generations of young people who benefited from his leadership and influence; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Estel Ray Mills, reflecting fondly upon his many accomplishments in education and his even more impressive résumé as a husband, father, and grandfather, and extend our sympathy and condolences to his family and many friends.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.