

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 491

By Helton

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of William C. "Bill" Bennett of Chattanooga.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of William C. "Bill" Bennett, a former member of the Hamilton County Commission and former Hamilton County Assessor of Property; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Bennett was a public servant of traditional values who cherished the relationships he made in the public sector, and he always remained true to his motto: "Try to make a difference every day."; and

WHEREAS, one of the seven children born to Ernest Denton Bennett, Sr., and Mary Roberts Bennett, Bill Bennett worked on the family farm as a youth and learned the precepts of Christianity from his father, a part-time preacher; and

WHEREAS, he received his early education in a two-room school before moving to Cookeville, where he attended Central High School and played football for the legendary Coach Eddie Watson; and

WHEREAS, after working briefly as a sportswriter in Cookeville, Mr. Bennett joined the U.S. Army Reserve and moved to Chattanooga, where he was a sportswriter for the *Chattanooga Times*; and

WHEREAS, he eventually gained employment with Combustion Engineering and worked there for seventeen years; through hard work, skill, and intelligence, he achieved the benchmark of being an engineer; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Bennett and his good friend Representative Bobby Wood opened Carriage Hill Insurance in 1986, and they remained in business together until 1994; and

WHEREAS, active in political campaigns and desiring to immerse himself in public service, Mr. Bennett ran for and was elected to the Hamilton County Commission in 1980;

representing District 9, which was comprised of the Ooltewah and Collegedale areas, he was the lone Republican member of the county commission at the time and only one of three Republicans holding elective office in Hamilton County; and

WHEREAS, as a county commissioner, he was instrumental in the implementation of a county-wide system of ambulance service, the improvement of fire protection services, the development of industrial parks and the Little Debbie Parkway, and the extension of sewer services into communities in his district, which project was pivotal to commercial development in the growing Ooltewah area; and

WHEREAS, after serving fourteen years on the Hamilton County Commission, including three terms as chairman, Mr. Bennett was appointed to serve as Hamilton County Assessor of Property in 1994 due to a vacancy; and

WHEREAS, honored as statewide Assessor of the Year in 1996 after only two years on the job, Mr. Bennett was elected to five terms as assessor and served a total of twenty-two years in that important office; he was president of the statewide assessor's association from 1999-2000 and received a lifetime achievement award from that organization in 2009; and

WHEREAS, he was appointed to the State Board of Equalization by Governor Bill Haslam and eventually served as chair of that body; and

WHEREAS, after thirty-six years of proficient service to the citizens of Hamilton County, Mr. Bennett decided to step away from county government when his term ended in 2016, bringing to a conclusion an unparalleled career in elected office; and

WHEREAS, in 2008, he had suffered a serious illness, but he was eventually blessed with remission from multiple myeloma; after he fully recovered his health, he was determined to live life to its fullest; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Bennett was a lifelong, avid, and devoted fan of the University of Tennessee Volunteers; he held football season tickets for decades and from 1969 onward, attended the games with his son, J.B.; and

WHEREAS, he enjoyed coaching his and other children in youth baseball and softball leagues, and a certain baseball field in Harrison is named in his honor; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Bennett was an active and devout member of Lake Hills Church of Christ, which he attended faithfully for more than fifty years; and

WHEREAS, William C. Bennett is survived by his wife of more than sixty-one years, Marguerite, to whom he fondly referred as "The Speaker of the House"; his children, Lee Ann (Madison) Roane, J.B. Bennett, Dr. Brad (Dr. Kathleen Pridgen) Bennett; his grandchildren, Dorothy Frances Bennett and Thomas William Bennett; his brothers, Ernest Denton Bennett, Jr., Eugene Bennett, and Frank (Linda) Bennett; and numerous nieces, nephews, and extended family members; another grandchild, Charles Merrit Bennett, is soon to be born; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his brothers, Floyd Bennett and Dean Bennett, and his sister, Martha Jane McHood; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of William C. "Bill" Bennett, reflecting fondly upon his thirty-six years of dedicated public service in Hamilton County and his stalwart commitment to advancing the public good as an elected official, citizen, and family man.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Bennett.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.