

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1130

By Martin G

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend William F. "Bill" Knowles for his astute service to Hamilton County.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to specially recognize those estimable public servants who have dedicated themselves to improving the quality of life for their fellow citizens; and

WHEREAS, one such estimable individual is William F. "Bill" Knowles, who has rendered fifty years of devoted service as Hamilton County Clerk; and

WHEREAS, the longest-serving elected official in Hamilton County, Mr. Knowles was initially elected as county clerk in 1974 and elected to his thirteenth term in 2022; and

WHEREAS, raised in the St. Elmo community of Chattanooga, Bill Knowles is one of six children born to the late Chattanooga Police Detective Claude Knowles and Rose Knowles; he was honorably discharged from the United States Army Reserve at the rank of Sergeant First Class; and

WHEREAS, alongside a dedicated team of deputy clerks, Bill Knowles and the Hamilton County Clerk's Office have worked diligently to better serve the public by evaluating and implementing several new improvements; and

WHEREAS, under his leadership as Clerk, the Hamilton County Clerk's Office has eliminated lengthy tag-renewal lines by introducing mail-order vehicle registration renewals; in 2001, Mr. Knowles also convinced the State that vehicle registration renewal would be possible through an internet application, making Hamilton County the first in the State to offer the online service. The tag-renewal model played an impactful role in the legislature and was eventually adopted by all ninety-five counties in the State; and

WHEREAS, each step of the office's progress, coupled with the construction of a satellite branch tag and title building, has enabled busy motorists to avoid traffic congestion around the downtown courthouse; in 1993, the Clerk contracted with the State, enabling Hamilton County motorists to receive a replacement title in the Clerk's office, and thus eliminating a long wait when applying to the State office; and

WHEREAS, Bill Knowles followed suit with the State in 2004, making it possible to renew or replace a valid Tennessee driver license in the Hamilton County Clerk's Office; and

WHEREAS, the Hamilton County Clerk's Office has also conducted research and digitized records dating back to the County's inception to preserve local history; additionally, historical and current marriage records were computerized, enabling the public library staff and genealogists to conduct research online; and

WHEREAS, highly regarded and sought after for his expertise, Mr. Knowles served as clerk to the Quarterly Court and County Council, during which time he implemented an audio tape recording system to replace the pen and stenographer pad method used at the time; he later digitized a system to computerize county commission minutes and records. Now, following each county meeting, an MP3 file is sent to local media and made available to county government officials and inquiring citizens; and

WHEREAS, his extensive philosophy of government and institutional knowledge have proven valuable as president of the Tennessee County Officials Association and the Association of County Clerks; his improvements as clerk have been recognized by the National Association of Counties on several occasions; and

WHEREAS, in addition to serving the County Clerk's Organ Donor Awareness program, Mr. Knowles has served as a member of several boards, including those of the local Salvation Army, the Public Bible School Committee, Advancing the Ministry of the Gospel, and the Convention and Visitors Bureau; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to awards and accolades, Mr. Knowles was named Outstanding Official of the Year by the County Officials Association and County Clerk of the Year three separate times; and

WHEREAS, additional honors include a citizenship award from the Civitan Club and a distinguished alum award from Central High School; in 1978, he was a recipient of an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Trevecca University; and

WHEREAS, Bill Knowles is most grateful for the love and support of his beloved wife of sixty-eight years, Marlene Coulter Knowles; his children, Reba, Finley, and Alan; eight grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Knowles is deeply devoted to his faith and attends Ridgedale Baptist Church in Chattanooga with his wife; and

WHEREAS, the success of the State of Tennessee, the strength of our communities, and the overall vitality of our society depend, in great measure, on the dedication of people such as Mr. Knowles, who use their considerable talents and resources to serve others; and

WHEREAS, Bill Knowles is wholly committed to the noble precepts of public service that have earned Tennessee recognition as the Volunteer State, and he should be specially recognized; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend William F. "Bill" Knowles for his honorable and astute service to the good people of Tennessee during his tenure as Hamilton County Clerk and extend to him our best wishes for continued success.

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.