

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 89

By Ramsey

A RESOLUTION designating March 13-20, 2011, as "Jeff Byrd Week" in Tennessee.

WHEREAS, from time to time, the members of this General Assembly pause in their deliberations to specially recognize an individual whose impact on the local and statewide levels is best memorialized through the designation of a period of time in that individual's honor; and

WHEREAS, the late Jeff Byrd of Bristol, President and General Manager of the Bristol Motor Speedway, was one such individual, and his visionary leadership, commitment to community service, and generosity in life were without peer. It is wholly fitting that he be remembered and honored by the designation of a week in his honor; and

WHEREAS, a native of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Mr. Byrd was the son of the late Elizabeth Gabriel Byrd and Herbert Carlton Byrd. A talented athlete and a competitor at heart, he played football for Wake Forest University, from which he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in history and politics in 1972, and he participated in recreation basketball and softball leagues through 2009; and

WHEREAS, following his graduation from college, Jeff Byrd embarked upon a career as a sports writer at the *Winston-Salem Journal*, as his father had done before him, before joining the sports marketing department of the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company; and

WHEREAS, while at R. J. Reynolds, Mr. Byrd was instrumental in the development and growth of motorsports throughout the United States. He was involved in the development and implementation of a number of sport and event marketing programs, including many which impacted the National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) and the National Association of Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR), before he was promoted to the role of Vice President of Business Development; and

WHEREAS, in 1996, Jeff Byrd accepted the post of Vice President and General Manager of Bristol Motor Speedway and Dragway, a position offered by then-Chief Executive Officer O. Bruton Smith; and

WHEREAS, possessing natural leadership abilities and an unwavering commitment to the pursuit of excellence, Mr. Byrd was promoted to become President and General Manager of the speedway in 2002 and, from that moment until his death, he led the organization through tremendous growth and was instrumental in the establishment of Bristol Motor Speedway as the premiere motorsports facility in the country; and

WHEREAS, a firm believer in the importance of civic involvement, he and his wife, Claudia, organized the Bristol Chapter of Speedway Children's Charities, a nonprofit agency dedicated to serving those children in need in northeast Tennessee and southwest Virginia; and

WHEREAS, Jeff Byrd served as the president of a number of civic organizations, including the United Way of Bristol, NETWORKS - Sullivan County Partnership, the Bristol Chamber of Commerce, the Bristol Noon Rotary Club, and the King College Board of Trustees, and as a member of the boards of the Regional Alliance for Economic Development, First Tennessee Bank Advisory Board, Wellmont Health System, the East Tennessee State University Roan Scholars Program, the Kingsport Community Foundation, and Junior Achievement, among many others; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to accolades, Mr. Byrd was the recipient of many awards throughout his life, including the Milligan College Leaders in Christian Service Award, and he was chosen for induction into the Junior Achievement Business Hall of Fame and named a "Friend of Education" by the Tennessee Education Association; and

WHEREAS, all aspects of Jeff Byrd's life were informed and influenced by his faith, which served as the foundation for all of his life decisions and relationships. He was an active and devout member of the First Presbyterian Church in Kingsport, which served faithfully an elder; and

WHEREAS, he was also devoted to his family, and he always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Byrd enjoyed the loving companionship of Claudia Holder Byrd, with whom he was joined in loving matrimony in 1974, and he was the loving father and father-in-law of Belton and Jerry Caldwell and Christian and Amy Byrd; and

WHEREAS, he will be sorely missed by his siblings and their spouses, Johanna and John Davis and Michael Carlton and Deb Byrd; his seven grandchildren, Ashton Byrd, Weston Byrd, Reeves Byrd, Caleb Caldwell, Emma Caldwell, Bella Caldwell, and Lila Caldwell; and a number of nieces and nephews; and

WHEREAS, Jeff Byrd leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

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

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby designate March 13-20, 2011, as "Jeff Byrd Week" in Tennessee in honor of an upstanding and generous individual.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we extend our deepest sympathies to the family and friends of Mr. Byrd.

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