

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 202

By Yarbro

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of David Williams II of Nashville.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of David Williams II; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Williams was a longtime professor and administrator at Vanderbilt University who was beloved by his university family for his acumen, integrity, and dedication to his profession; and

WHEREAS, a native of Detroit, Michigan, Mr. Williams was a middle school teacher and coach in Detroit public schools from 1970 to 1980; he received a Bachelor of Science degree in Social Sciences and a Master of Arts degree in Education from Northern Michigan University, where he was a member of the university track team; he earned a Master of Business Administration and a Doctor of Jurisprudence from the University of Detroit, where he served on the university's Board of Trust; and

WHEREAS, prior to working at Vanderbilt, David Williams was a member of the student affairs administration at The Ohio State University, where he was also a law professor; he held an LLM in taxation from New York University and was a member of the American Bar Association as well as the bar associations of Tennessee, Michigan, and the District of Columbia; and

WHEREAS, David Williams arrived at Vanderbilt University in 2000, serving initially as Vice Chancellor—the first African American to hold this position at the university; he also held the offices of General Counsel, Secretary of the Board of Trust, and a tenured professor of law; eventually, he added the roles of Chancellor for Athletics and University Affairs and Athletics Director; and

WHEREAS, during the fifteen years that Mr. Williams was at the helm of Vanderbilt University athletics, the Commodores won four national championships in bowling, baseball, and women's tennis; Vanderbilt also won more than twenty league titles and tournaments, including the men's golf and women's tennis Southeastern Conference championships and the Southland Conference Bowling Championship. Additionally, the Vanderbilt football team played in six bowl games, breaking a twenty-six-year drought in 2008; and

WHEREAS, a hallmark of David Williams's tenure was the expansion of academic and experiential opportunities for student athletes, including financial support for summer study abroad, an opportunity often not available to student athletes due to their demanding schedules; Vanderbilt's is the country's most comprehensive summer internship program for student athletes, in large part because of the efforts of Mr. Williams; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Williams ensured that Vanderbilt student athletes were in a league of their own; they earned a cumulative GPA of over 3.0 every year for the past thirteen years, and in the NCAA's Academic Progress Rates for the 2016-2017 academic year, a total of eleven Commodore programs finished with perfect 1,000 APR scores, while Vanderbilt football finished No. 2 in the nation; and

WHEREAS, David Williams also brought significant attention to sports' impact on society; he was instrumental in leading efforts for recognition of and reconciliation with Vanderbilt pioneers—such as Godfrey Dillard and the late Perry Wallace, the first African-American varsity basketball players at the university—and in educating the community about the university's past; and

WHEREAS, ever keeping an eye toward overall university advancement, Mr. Williams led numerous expansions, including those for Vanderbilt Stadium, Hawkins Field, Brownlee O. Currey Tennis Center, Memorial Gym, the Hendrix Dining Room, McGugin Center, the Student Recreation and Wellness Center, the golf teams' clubhouse and hitting bay, and a new bowling alley; he also headed the development of the multipurpose facility, which houses an indoor practice field and an indoor track; and

WHEREAS, a nationally recognized leader, David Williams served on the NCAA's General Advisory Board, Academic Council, and Enforcement Task Force, and he served as chair of the Infractions Appeals Committee; he was also a member of the NCAA's Minority Opportunities Committee; and

WHEREAS, David Williams was an active and important part of the Nashville community as well, participating in numerous worthy organizations and serving on the boards of the Middle Tennessee Community Foundation, Nashville Sports Council, Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame, and Nashville Public Education Foundation; and

WHEREAS, during his time as Vice Chancellor for Athletics and University Affairs and Athletics Director, David Williams was a trailblazer, transforming the program to its greatest success in history while dramatically elevating and improving the student athlete experience; at the time of his death, he had recently stepped down from these roles to return to being a full-time professor at Vanderbilt Law School, where he was set to establish a new Sports, Law and Society Program; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Williams was also deeply devoted to his family, and he remained true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, he is survived by his wife, Gail Carr Williams; his four children, Erika Juanita, David Williams III, Samantha Nicole, and Nicholas McKenzie; his six grandchildren, David IV, Jazmin, Tiffany, Dayon, Daiaha, and Zoe; and his great-grandson, Desmond; and

WHEREAS, David Williams made untold contributions to Vanderbilt University, and his legacy will live on in the progress he made and in the lives he forever changed for the better; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of 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 ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of David Williams II, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

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

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