

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 202

By Henry

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Robert Morgan Simms,
former distinguished staff member of the
Tennessee General Assembly.

WHEREAS, the members and the legislative staff of this General Assembly were deeply saddened to learn of the untimely passing of Robert Morgan Simms, one of the most resolute and dedicated public servants this state has ever produced; and

WHEREAS, a true gentleman and scholar, Robert Morgan Simms served as the Legal Analyst for the Senate Judiciary Committee for three decades, winning the respect and admiration of every member of the Senate, the legislative staff, and the legal community of the State of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, a native Tennessean, Robert Morgan (Bob) Simms was born on May 17, 1950, to Freda Morgan Simms and Arthur Edward Simms, Jr., who were residents of Nashville where Bob's father was employed by the Veteran's Administration after having graduated from law school at Cumberland University School of Law in Lebanon, Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, shortly thereafter the family moved to the Simms' ancestral home in Fayetteville, Tennessee, where Arthur Simms, Jr., then became Lincoln County's first General Sessions Court Judge. Judge Simms' public service followed in the footsteps of his father, Arthur Simms, Sr., also a graduate of Cumberland Law School, who served as County Judge of Lincoln County for thirty-two years; and

WHEREAS, growing up in Fayetteville, Bob Simms attended Robert E. Lee Elementary School and Fayetteville Central High School, joined his family in worship every Sunday at First Methodist Church, and achieved the prestigious rank of Eagle Scout as a member of the Boy Scouts, earning the Boy Scout God and Country Award; and

WHEREAS, during his high school career at Fayetteville Central, Bob Simms served as treasurer of his freshman class, co-editor of the school annual, and delegate to Boy's State in addition to having the honor of serving as a page to U.S. Congressman Joe L. Evins; and

WHEREAS, in 1972, Bob Simms graduated, *cum laude*, from the University of the South at Sewanee, Tennessee, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science. At Sewanee he was a member of the Order of Gownsmen, which is the student governing body, the Sewanee Jazz Society, and Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity; and

WHEREAS, following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, Bob Simms attended law school at Cumberland School of Law at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama, where he was a member of the International Law Society and Phi Alpha Delta Legal Fraternity; during this time he clerked for the distinguished law firm of Lipscomb & Lipscomb in Bessemer, Alabama; and

WHEREAS, obtaining his Doctor of Jurisprudence from Cumberland School of Law in 1975, Bob Simms served in the capacity of legal clerk to the Honorable William S. Russell, Judge of the Tennessee Circuit Court of Appeals, Middle Division, from August 1975 until January 1977; and

WHEREAS, Bob Simms began his remarkable career with the Tennessee General Assembly in February 1977, when he accepted the position of Legal Analyst for the Senate Judiciary Committee, serving under Senator James H. White, Chairman; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Simms quickly exhibited an extraordinary work ethic with a profoundly noble sense of duty to the legislature to produce accurate and comprehensive legal analyses for the committee members, which rightfully earned him the respect and gratitude of the entire membership of the Senate; and

WHEREAS, during his tenure with the Senate Judiciary Committee, Bob Simms had the honor to serve under a succession of three other distinguished chairmen, Senator William H. Ortwein, Senator John Rucker, Sr., and Senator Curtis Person, and each one of these gentlemen came to view him as a skillful advisor, a dedicated legal scholar, and a trusted friend; and

WHEREAS, Bob Simms, in his capacity as Legal Analyst for the Senate Judiciary Committee, served as Secretary to the Tennessee Supreme Court's Commission on Rules of

Criminal Procedures in Tennessee and was the Senate Judiciary Committee delegate to the Tennessee Sentencing Commission; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Simms' voluminous workload increased tremendously as the result of the First Extraordinary Session of the 94th Tennessee General Assembly in 1985, when the legislature was convened to address the prison-overcrowding crisis, which later led to a major overhaul of the criminal sentencing statutes through the work of the Tennessee Sentencing Commission; and

WHEREAS, during the lengthy and expansive hearings and sessions held on the sentencing law revisions, Bob Simms' tireless efforts provided untold benefits to each and every member of the General Assembly, and helped to enact a comprehensive set of guidelines and statutes; and

WHEREAS, in his work for the Senate Judiciary Committee, he served as mentor to scores of committee interns and law clerks and shared his keen insight, years of experience, and thoughtful advice as they either pursued or continued their legal careers. Many prominent and successful attorneys in Tennessee today were privileged to have worked with Bob Simms; and

WHEREAS, handling every challenge and deadline with his gentlemanly demeanor and steadfast diligence for quality, Bob Simms was honored in 1999 by the Tennessee General Assembly as Employee of the Year for the Senate, and recognized for his faithful, effective, professional, and dedicated service; and

WHEREAS, a great colleague and good friend with a wonderfully dry sense of humor, Bob Simms was warmly, as well as highly, regarded by his co-workers in the legislature who knew of his love of the outdoors and for music, especially the blues and rock and roll music of the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Eric Clapton, and Duane Allman, to name just a few of his select favorites; and

WHEREAS, an accomplished guitar-player, fly fisherman, and bird hunter, he enthralled his envious friends with tales of his annual pheasant-hunting treks to the western states, often bringing pheasant feathers to show and share; and

WHEREAS, an avid golfer, he cherished the magic and the memories of his trips to the Annual PGA Masters Championship in Augusta, GA; and

WHEREAS, with his passing, Robert Morgan Simms has left behind an indelible legacy of effective public service that will not soon be equaled; and

WHEREAS, preceded in death by his parents, Mr. Simms is survived by his brother and sister-in-law, William Arthur Simms and Joyce Chappell Simms; his niece and her husband, Laura Simms Hanks and Zach Hanks; his niece, Christina Alison Simms; and many loving cousins, aunts, uncles, and dear friends; and

WHEREAS, gentlemen of his stature do not often walk among us, and it is thus appropriate that this General Assembly should pay tribute to this estimable public servant and exceptional man; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Robert Morgan Simms, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character, his exemplary service to the State of Tennessee, 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 Robert Morgan Simms.

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