

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 1365

By Massey

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Morgan Brown Ayres, Jr., of Knoxville.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Morgan Brown Ayres, Jr., a former State Senator, accomplished investment banker, iconic alumnus of the University of Tennessee, and a gentleman who lived life on his own terms; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ayres was first elected to the State Senate in 1966, and during his eight years on Capitol Hill, he passed far-reaching, impactful legislation that created the Public Building Authority and resulted in the construction of the City County Building in Knoxville and numerous airports, sewer, water, and gas systems, and public buildings across Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, he also helped reform the Industrial Development Board Act to spur economic development and passed legislation to increase access to low-interest student loans and stimulate growth in the commercial airline industry; and

WHEREAS, in 1971, he successfully sponsored legislation to repeal Tennessee's "bone-dry" law, thus making it legal to possess up to a gallon of alcohol in all ninety-five counties; and

WHEREAS, the eldest of the four sons born to Morgan Brown Ayres, Sr., and Patricia Miller Ayres, Brown Ayres was raised in Knoxville and attended public schools there through the eleventh grade before graduating from Kentucky Military Institute; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ayres then attended the University of Tennessee (UT), where he was a member of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity; later in life, he gained recognition as one of the institution's most prominent, personable, and public-spirited alumni; and

WHEREAS, he proudly served his country for three and one-half years as a Staff Sergeant in the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War; and

WHEREAS, after marrying a fellow service member in 1954, Mr. Ayres returned to Knoxville, where he worked as an investment banker with Cumberland Securities, the family firm founded by his father the very year Mr. Ayres was born; and

WHEREAS, in addition to being a distinguished UT alumnus, Brown Ayres was the oldest living grandson of the twelfth President of the University of Tennessee, who was also named Brown Ayres and who is the namesake of UT's iconic Ayres Hall, a Gothic Revival structure that rises 140 feet above its base with a distinctive checkerboard feature at the top of the tower; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ayres was instrumental in the 2010 multi-million-dollar renovation of Ayres Hall, establishing an endowment for the new clocks on each of the four faces of the tower that were named in honor of his grandmother, Katie Anderson Ayres; and

WHEREAS, he also was tenacious in his efforts to replace a plaque, attached by the builder in 1921, that incorrectly read "Ayers" Hall; this misspelling was a source of embarrassment and consternation for Mr. Ayres, but in 1992, after decades of conversations, even battles with the University, he finally secured the installation of a new plaque, at UT's expense, that correctly reads "Ayres Hall"; and

WHEREAS, a member of the Class of 1953, Mr. Ayres was honored by UT with the Accomplished Alumni Award during a celebration of his ninetieth birthday in March 2021; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his parents, Brown Ayres was preceded in death by his sons Morgan Brown "Chip" Ayres III (Kim) and Barry Miller Ayres; and

WHEREAS, this remarkable gentleman is survived by his son, Edmond Alexander "Ed" Ayres; grandchildren Ashley Morgan (Tim) Shannon, Austin Alexander Ayres, Alexandra Morgan "Alex" Ayres, and Julian Deane Ayres; great-grandchildren, Ariyanna Morgan Jenae' Shannon, Teagan Marie Shannon, Emery Rose Shannon, and Timothy James "TJ" Shannon;

and three younger brothers, Thomas Miller "Tommy" Ayres (Midge), Samuel Randolph "Randy" Ayres, and Julian Alexander "Zander" Ayres, M.D. (Donna); and

WHEREAS, he is also survived by his best friend from childhood and longtime partner, JoAnn Coffman, and her family members, daughter, Cindy Johnson, son, Chuck Coffman, and grandchildren, Charlie Coffman, Kate Coffman, and Katherine Walters, and his beloved great-granddaughter, Laci Walters; and

WHEREAS, during a lifetime overflowing with accomplishment and adventure, Brown Ayres distinguished himself as a leader in a world full of followers, and his legacy in government and public service will live on for generations to come; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Morgan "Brown" Ayres, Jr., of Knoxville, reflecting fondly upon his bountiful life of purpose and commitment and his many contributions to the University of Tennessee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we extend our sympathy and condolences to the family and many friends of Mr. Ayres.

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.