**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO CONGRATULATE GENE BALL, ORANGEBURG COUNTY DIRECTOR OF FIRE SERVICES, UPON THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT AFTER TWENTY YEARS OF OUTSTANDING SERVICE, AND TO WISH HIM CONTINUED SUCCESS AND HAPPINESS IN ALL HIS FUTURE ENDEAVORS.

Whereas, the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives have learned that Gene Ball began a well‑deserved retirement on June 2, 2017, after more than three and a half decades as a dedicated firefighter, the last twenty of which have been as the highly regarded Orangeburg County Director of Fire Services; and

Whereas, born in Florence in May 1943, he graduated from high school in Elloree, then married his sweetheart, Judy, in 1970. Together they raised one son, Stephen. He earned a degree in Bible and pastoral studies from Bob Jones University in Greenville in 1973; and

Whereas, Mr. Ball began some master’s level work at the University of South Carolina in education, but in April 1979, his journey as a firefighter began when he took a fire course; and

Whereas, a community servant, he first became a chaplain for Santee and found himself responding to fires because no one else was available. When Santee got a radio tower and a more organized system, he became one of ten charter members of the Santee District Volunteer Fire Department, serving as lieutenant, battalion chief, and co‑chief of the department briefly in the early 1990s; and

Whereas, in 1991, Mr. Ball became a certified fire marshal and was named chief of the Santee Fire Department in November 1992, taking the position with an assurance that improvement would be made to the area’s Class 9 Insurance Service Office (ISO) rating. He remained with the department for about twenty years, and under his leadership, the district’s fire rating improved to a Class 4, greatly reducing insurance premiums in the district; and

Whereas, some districts had only old buildings or sheds that could not even be heated and old and inferior equipment because of no funding. The Santee fire district operated as a special purpose tax district, collecting tax money to fund the area’s fire service, and, as a result, became the standard for what other departments could realize with funding, which began to happen in the mid‑1990s; and

Whereas, improvements began when the Orangeburg County Fire Commission was formed. The district’s twenty‑three departments received nineteen thousand dollars in the first year to purchase protective gear for every member of each department, but then the districts needed to buy trucks. By 1998, fifteen new pumpers were purchased through a seven‑year lease‑purchase agreement even though few districts had a building that could house the trucks; and

Whereas, the promise of stations came in 1999 when Orangeburg County Council allocated 3.1 million dollars for buildings through a fifteen‑year bond. Today rural areas that had a Class 9 ISO rating now have Class 4 or 5, an improvement that has saved homeowners over 4 million dollars annually on home insurance premiums; and

Whereas, through the years, Mr. Ball has taken more than one hundred ten fire academy courses and has served as a fire academy instructor, arson investigator, and fire and life safety educator; and

Whereas, the seventy‑four‑year‑old pastor at Santee Bible Baptist Church plans to remain with the fire district, serving as a project manager and consultant for the Orangeburg County Fire Commission, a chaplain for the South Carolina State Association of Fire Chiefs, and a volunteer with the Vance Fire Department; and

Whereas, the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives are grateful for the years of unparalleled dedication that Gene Ball has devoted to the Orangeburg County Fire Commission and wish him many years of enjoyment as he retires from the fire district which he helped to create. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, congratulate Gene Ball, Orangeburg County Director of Fire Services, upon the occasion of his retirement after twenty years of outstanding service, and wish him continued success and happiness in all his future endeavors.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to Gene Ball.

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