**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO EXPRESS THE PROFOUND SORROW OF THE MEMBERS OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES UPON THE PASSING OF W. BURKE WATSON OF SUMTER, AND TO EXTEND THE DEEPEST SYMPATHY TO HIS FAMILY AND MANY FRIENDS.

Whereas, the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives were deeply saddened to learn of the death of W. Burke Watson of Sumter on December 13, 2009, at the venerable age of eighty‑three; and

Whereas, born in Sumter to William Burke Watson, Sr., and Kate Brogdon Watson, young Burke entered The Citadel in 1943 and took up boxing as a sport. Leaving the Corps of Cadets to join the Marine Corps during World War II, he served in Guam and China. Upon his return to The Citadel, he continued his boxing career and won the Individual Southern Conference Championship in his division, graduating from The Citadel in 1948. A strong supporter of his alma mater, he faithfully served it throughout his life in various capacities, including as director and vice president of the Brigadier Association and member of the board of directors for the Citadel Trust; and

Whereas, upon his return to Sumter in 1950, he and his partner, Clifton G. Brown, founded Brown‑Watson Inc.; and

Whereas, as a man who believed in committed involvement with his community, Burke Watson actively served with many local organizations and governmental bodies. He was a former member of the Sumter City-County Zoning Board of Appeal, the Tax Appeal Board, and the Sumter County Development Board and served as secretary‑treasurer of the South Carolina Association of Realtors. He was also a co‑founder of Wilson Hall School and served on its board, as well as that of the National Bank of South Carolina, and had served as a trustee of Crosswell Children’s Home for more than forty years. He was a life member and past president of the Sumter Optimist Club; and

Whereas, a member of First Presbyterian Church of Sumter, this man of faith served his God as both deacon and elder; and

Whereas, as an editorial in Sumter’s *The Item* put it, “his defining achievement was to establish the Optimist Boxing Club in 1953, a program that turned boys into men…Watson made sure his young boxers understood what he expected of them, that he had rules, and that it was his way or the highway. He helped give structure to their lives as they focused on doing their very best in the toughest of all sports.” For more than fifty years, he gave his time, talent, and resources to this organization, and to recognize his dedication, the Optimist Youth Center was named in his honor; and

Whereas, many other honors also came his way, but the one that speaks most eloquently to his character is the YMCA Humanitarian of the Year Award, bestowed on him in 2003. In addition, he was inducted into the Sumter Athletic Hall of Fame, The Citadel Athletic Hall of Fame, and the Carolinas Boxing Hall of Fame, where he was also a recipient of the Ambassador Award. In 2002, former Governor Jim Hodges presented him with the Order of the Silver Crescent, South Carolina’s highest award for volunteer and community service; and

Whereas, having been predeceased by his beloved wife, Jeanne Carr Watson, he leaves to cherish his memory sons W. Burke Watson III, Michael C. Watson, and Keller H. Watson; daughter Kathryn W. McElveen; nine grandchildren; and a host of other family members and friends. A man with a keen mind, a kind disposition, an infectious sense of humor, devotion to his family and friends, and loyalty to his church, school, and country, he will be greatly missed. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, express their profound sorrow upon the passing of W. Burke Watson of Sumter, and extend the deepest sympathy to his family and many friends.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to W. Burke Watson III for the family.

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