

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 533

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A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of former Tennessee
Commissioner of Education Robert L. McElrath.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the death of Robert L. McElrath of Greeneville; and

WHEREAS, he was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities, including a term as Tennessee Commissioner of Education; and

WHEREAS, this devoted educator knew first hand the immense value of education, having earned an associate's degree from Mars Hill College, a bachelor's degree from Baldwin-Wallace College, a master's degree from the University of North Carolina, and a doctorate in educational administration from the University of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, during his career, Dr. McElrath served with acumen and alacrity as a classroom teacher, elementary and high school principal, Superintendent of Greeneville City Schools, and graduate professor of educational leadership at East Tennessee State University, earning high praise from his students and peers alike for the unsurpassed quality of his work and character; and

WHEREAS, known throughout the profession as an innovator, he was hand selected by Governor Lamar Alexander to serve as Tennessee Commissioner of Education; from 1981 until 1987, he oversaw this State's educational system during a period of remarkable transition in which Tennessee became known as a national leader in school improvement; and

WHEREAS, Dr. McElrath was a pioneer in developing the Career Ladder Program and the Better Schools Program, a 10-point initiative for improving education in Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Governor Alexander remembered the unparalleled advances that were precipitated by Dr. McElrath's leadership and said, "He was a real education pioneer. Without him, there would have been no Better Schools Program -- no extra pay and respect for master teachers, no Governor's schools for gifted students, no new funding for excellence in our schools. We are all in his debt and will miss him"; and

WHEREAS, well known as a leader of the greatest merit, Dr. McElrath served his profession, his State, and his Nation in numerous capacities; he was a member of the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees, the Tennessee Board of Regents, and the Education Commission of the United States and a veteran of the United States Army; and

WHEREAS, in 1983, President Ronald Reagan appointed Dr. McElrath as a member of the National Council on Educational Research; he served with acumen and alacrity and was reappointed in 1986; and

WHEREAS, a devout Christian, he was an active member of the Greeneville First Baptist Church; and

WHEREAS, Robert L. McElrath was also deeply dedicated to his family, and he always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order, and he cherished the loving companionship of his wife of fifty-three years, Betty Duck McElrath; and

WHEREAS, he was the devoted father of a son and daughter-in-law, Rick and Annette McElrath, and a daughter and son-in-law, Robin and Alan Stevens, and the proud and loving grandfather of six grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Dr. McElrath leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; he earned unfettered respect for the exemplary quality of his public service, for his unsurpassed work ethic, and for his unquestionable integrity; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that 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 SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we honor the memory of Dr. Robert L. McElrath, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character, his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction, and his estimable service to Tennessee as an educator and civic leader of the utmost ability and dedication.

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

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