

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 66

By Crowe

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Howard Henry Baker Jr.
of Huntsville.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Howard Henry Baker Jr.; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Baker was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens. The first popularly elected Republican from Tennessee to serve in the United States Senate, Mr. Baker served three terms as senator, was appointed as President Ronald Reagan's chief of staff, and held the office of the U.S. Ambassador to Japan under President George W. Bush; and

WHEREAS, born on November 15, 1925, to Howard Henry Baker Sr. and Dora Ladd Baker, Howard Baker Jr. attended public schools in Huntsville before enrolling in McCallie School in Chattanooga, in 1941; and

WHEREAS, following graduation from McCallie in 1943, Mr. Baker enlisted in the United States Navy, and was chosen as a candidate in the Navy's V-12 officer training program. He studied electrical engineering at the University of the South in Sewanee and at Tulane University and, during summer and semester breaks, he resumed his naval duties; and

WHEREAS, as a lieutenant in the Navy, he served briefly in the South Pacific during World War II; and

WHEREAS, upon concluding his naval service, Howard Baker attended the University of Tennessee School of Law in Knoxville, from which he earned a degree in law in 1949, and returned to Huntsville and joined the law firm founded by his grandfather; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Baker's grandfather was also a judge, and his grandmother served as the first female sheriff in the State of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Howard Baker Jr. became engrossed in the world of politics when he ran his father's congressional campaign in 1950. Howard Baker Sr. successfully gained election to the 82nd Congress as the representative of Tennessee's Second Congressional District, and gained reelection to the office six more times, becoming the second-ranking Republican on the House Finance, Ways and Means Committee; and

WHEREAS, Howard Baker Jr. continued practicing law in Huntsville and, in 1964, he took the first steps in his own political career when he ran in the special election for the seat vacated when Senator Estes Kefauver died; and

WHEREAS, though unsuccessful in that first race, he ran again in 1966. He garnered fifty-six percent of the popular vote in the '66 race; and

WHEREAS, Senator Baker served three terms, from 1967 until 1985, during which time he earned the respect of his colleagues for his bipartisan efforts and was nicknamed "The Great Conciliator." He often said that these three terms stood as the career achievement of which he was most proud; and

WHEREAS, from the outset, Howard Baker was a respected politician whose work reflected his devotion to serving the people. During his first term of office, he was instrumental in passing legislation that allowed the federal government to share revenues with the states and helped draft the Clean Air Act; and

WHEREAS, after gaining reelection for his second term in 1972, Mr. Baker was appointed as the co-chair of the Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities, and his forthright honesty and unwavering pursuit of the truth earned the respect of millions of Americans during the televised Senate Watergate hearings of 1973-74. It was during the hearings that he asked the iconic question, "What did the President know, and when did he know it?"; and

WHEREAS, during his tenure as senator, he served from 1977 to 1981 as the Senate Minority Leader and from 1981 to 1985 as the Senate Majority Leader; and

WHEREAS, Howard Baker ran against Ronald Reagan for the Republican nomination for president in 1980 and, in 1986, President Reagan asked him to serve as the chief of staff

following the resignation of Chief of Staff Donald Regan during the Iran-Contra crisis. Mr. Baker dedicated his many talents and leadership qualities to the position, and he played a key role in the process of restoring trust, both inside and outside of the White House; and

WHEREAS, following his departure from the White House, Mr. Baker returned to Huntsville and resumed his law practice at Baker Donelson in Huntsville; and

WHEREAS, once again called to service by the President of the United States, Mr. Baker was appointed by President George W. Bush to serve as the Ambassador to Japan in 2001, a post he held until 2005; and

WHEREAS, in 2003, Howard Baker was honored with the establishment of the Howard H. Baker Jr. Center for Public Policy at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to awards and accolades, Mr. Baker received numerous honors for his work, including the U.S. Senator John Heinz Award for Greatest Public Service by an Elected or Appointed Official in 1981, the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1984, and the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Paulownia Flowers from Japan in 2008; and

WHEREAS, in the world of politics, Howard Baker was widely known as a compromiser and a pragmatist who was a liberal on environmental issues, a moderate on civil rights, and a hawk on foreign policy. James A. Baker III referred to him as “the quintessential mediator, negotiator, and moderator”; and

WHEREAS, he was always active in his community and his church, and he held a lifelong passion for photography; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Baker was also deeply devoted to his family, and he always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, in 1951, Howard Baker was joined in matrimony with Joy Dirksen, and the couple shared many years of wedded bliss before she passed away in 1993. To their union were born two children, Darek and Cynthia; and

WHEREAS, he is survived by his wife, Nancy Landon Kassebaum, to whom he was married in 1996; his children; his daughter-in-law, Karen Baker; his grandchildren, Daniel, Matthew, Timothy, and Samuel; and two sisters, Mary Stuart and Beverly Patestides; and

WHEREAS, Howard Baker 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; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of 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 NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Howard Henry Baker Jr., reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character 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 Mr. Baker.

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