

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 764

By Norris

A RESOLUTION to honor Lt. Governor Ron Ramsey, Speaker of the Senate, for his twenty-four years of exemplary service to this General Assembly and the State of Tennessee.

WHEREAS, it is most fitting that this body recognize one of the most dedicated, most effective, and longest-serving elected officials this State has ever produced, namely one Ronald L. Ramsey of Blountville; and

WHEREAS, having proudly represented the citizens of Sullivan County for the last twenty years in the Senate, Lt. Governor Ramsey has announced his retirement from this body, after building a legacy in public service that is second to none; and

WHEREAS, for twenty-four years, the good people of Sullivan County have counted on Ron Ramsey to represent their values and concerns in Nashville, and he has done so ably while still maintaining his focus on matters of statewide importance; and

WHEREAS, although famous for his down-to-earth approach to politics and the legislature, Lt. Governor Ramsey has never shied away from addressing controversial issues and opinions, and he has always shown the courage of his convictions; and

WHEREAS, a native son of Tennessee who was born and raised in Blountville, Ron Ramsey learned the value of hard work early in life while working on his family's farm, as he rose early to milk cows with his brother Allen; and

WHEREAS, that commitment to hard work has continued throughout his life; he obtained his driver license at age sixteen, and his labors continued as he put in long hours at his grandfather's hardware store; and

WHEREAS, Lt. Governor Ramsey worked his way through East Tennessee State University (ETSU) and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Technology;

he has received the Outstanding Alumnus Award from his alma mater and a lifetime achievement award from ETSU's College of Business and Technology; and

WHEREAS, after only three years working as a surveyor, Lt. Governor Ramsey started his own company and built that company, Ron Ramsey and Associates, into one of the most successful realty and auction companies in the State; and

WHEREAS, he has been inducted into the Tennessee Auctioneers Association Hall of Fame, was named Realtor of the Year in 2007, and is past president of the Bristol Tennessee-Virginia Association of Realtors; and

WHEREAS, after successfully building his business and his family, Lt. Governor Ramsey offered his service to the people of his community as State representative in 1992 and served two terms as a stalwart member of a fighting Republican minority, standing up for more jobs, lower taxes, and smaller government; and

WHEREAS, after two terms in the House, Ron Ramsey moved to the Senate, where he continued to stand up for his district, which has expanded to include Johnson County and part of Carter County, and for conservative principles, gaining the trust, admiration, and respect of his fellow members; and

WHEREAS, Ron Ramsey introduced and passed important legislation to form a criminal DNA database, the "Johnia Berry Law," as well as legislation that created Tennessee's handgun permit system; and

WHEREAS, he served with distinction as the assistant Senate Republican floor leader during the 100th General Assembly and chairman of the Senate Environment and Conservation Committee during the 101st and 102nd General Assemblies; and

WHEREAS, Ron Ramsey stood against and exposed those who abused the public trust as chairman of the Senate Ethics Committee, thus restoring the people's trust in the institution of the Senate and the General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, rising quickly in leadership, serving first as caucus chairman then as majority leader, Ron Ramsey became renowned as a visionary leader; seeing opportunity

where others did not, he recruited candidates, traveled the State bringing a new message of conservative leadership, and introduced a bold new agenda for Republicans; and

WHEREAS, called the “Moses of the Tennessee Republican Party,” Lt. Governor Ramsey led his party out of the wilderness and to the promised land of the majority; and

WHEREAS, believing strongly that “it matters who governs,” Lt. Governor Ramsey played an instrumental role, both financially and politically, in helping Republicans make major gains not only in the Tennessee Senate, but also in the House of Representatives, which resulted in the election of the first Republican House Speaker since 1969; and

WHEREAS, taking to heart Winston Churchill’s motto, “Never, Never, Never Give Up,” Ron Ramsey stood not once, but twice, for Speaker of the Senate; by refusing to accept defeat, he proved his tenacity and his value as a leader to his colleagues; and

WHEREAS, on the historic day of January 9, 2007, Ron Ramsey was elected by the Senate as the first Republican Lieutenant Governor since 1869 and the first new Lieutenant Governor since 1971; he became the longest-serving Republican Senate Speaker in Tennessee history in 2009; and

WHEREAS, his legendary tenure of service as Speaker of the Senate has provided a steady hand of consistent conservative leadership to this great State, as Lt. Governor Ramsey has presided as Speaker of the Senate during the terms of three Speakers of the House and two Governors; and

WHEREAS, in the 2008 elections, he led Tennessee’s Republicans to a gain of three Senate seats and a solid five-seat majority; after gaining an astounding six seats in 2012, the Ramsey Senate achieved an unprecedented twenty-eight to five supermajority in the 2014 elections, a feat unmatched by either party in modern Tennessee history; and

WHEREAS, Lt. Governor Ramsey is the first Speaker of the Senate from Sullivan County in over 100 years, and he has always done his district proud by representing the people of Northeast Tennessee with distinction and serving as a constant reminder that Tennessee does not end at Knoxville, and in fact, East Tennessee does not begin until you reach Interstate 81; and

WHEREAS, Ron Ramsey ushered in an era of Republican government and conservative reform, which resulted in a constitutional amendment to prohibit a state income tax, as well as record tax cuts, including the elimination of the death tax and the beginning of the elimination of the Hall income tax, and the restoration of Tennessee's AAA credit rating; and

WHEREAS, as a small business owner himself, Lt. Governor Ramsey has ensured that Tennessee remains a pro-business state; believing that the best government governs least, he championed comprehensive tort reform, made the elimination of unnecessary regulation and red tape affecting business a priority, and traveled the state on Red Tape Road Trips in 2011, spreading the message of small government throughout the State; and

WHEREAS, Lt. Governor Ramsey's Red Tape Road Trips led to critical job-creating legislative reforms, such as the Unemployment Insurance Accountability Act of 2012, for which he was later awarded the National Unemployment Insurance Integrity Award in 2014; and

WHEREAS, not limiting himself to fostering change in the General Assembly, Lt. Governor Ramsey has been instrumental in judicial reform efforts, most notably his efforts that led to the appointment of a Republican attorney general and a Republican majority on the Supreme Court; and

WHEREAS, Lt. Governor Ramsey has served his party as chairman and executive committee member of the Republican Lieutenant Governors Association, chairman of the Tennessee delegation to the 2008 Republican National Convention, and member of the GOPAC Legislative Leaders Advisory Board; and

WHEREAS, tributes to his excellence as a legislator are far too numerous to mention; of the many honors he has received, among the most prestigious are the "Katie's Heroes" Award from DNA Saves; "Patriotic Employer" Award from the Department of Defense; Legislator of the Year award from the Tennessee CASA Association; "Taking Care of Business" Award from the Tennessee Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Senate Legislator of the Year award from Tennessee Right to Life; National Federation of Independent Business "Guardian of Small Business" Award; Tennessee School Boards Association Legislative Award; First District Tennessee Christian Coalition State Representative of the Year award; Tennessee Development District Association Legislator of the Year award in 1999, 2001, 2004, 2006, 2007,

and 2009; Lifetime Achievement Award from the Bristol Chamber of Commerce; and Conservation Legislator of the Year award; and

WHEREAS, the leading voice for economic growth in the General Assembly, Lt. Governor Ramsey has been named “The Best Lawmaker for Business in Tennessee” by *Business Tennessee* magazine for his success in implementing pro-growth policy to improve the State’s business climate; and

WHEREAS, having achieved his goals of historic change across all three branches of Tennessee government, Ron Ramsey has declared that life is flying by and that his priorities must be reordered; and

WHEREAS, for Lt. Governor Ramsey, politics is an honor, but not an obsession; he has declared his intention to return to Blountville to serve as a father to his married daughters, Sheena, Tiffany, and Madison, and “Papaw” to his five grandchildren, Parker, Briggs, Graham, Anders, and Sadie; and

WHEREAS, his wife, Sindy, his business partner and his best friend, is the wind beneath his wings and his inspiration; Ron Ramsey has been able to train his focus on the business of the State of Tennessee, only because he was confident that his family business was in the capable hands of his better half; and

WHEREAS, he has given back to his community and State through his involvement in numerous civic and charitable causes, showing that a true leader leads with a servant’s heart; and

WHEREAS, Ron Ramsey has relied heavily on his faith in God during the tenure of his service in this august body, knowing that through his Creator all things are possible; he expresses his faith as a member of Elizabeth Chapel United Methodist Church, where he has served in various capacities, including Sunday School teacher; and

WHEREAS, a true statesman and an inspirational leader, Ron Ramsey has forever changed the State of Tennessee with his endless optimism and spirited conservatism; Tennessee is better than he found it, and he leaves a legacy of lower taxes for taxpayers, more jobs for workers, and a smaller government for citizens; and

WHEREAS, Lt. Governor Ramsey now wishes to relinquish the numerous titles he holds at the completion of his term, including Lieutenant Governor, Mr. Speaker, and Senator, to focus solely on the one he holds dearest, "Papaw"; and

WHEREAS, Lt. Governor Ron Ramsey has set the standard for present and future legislative leadership, and his legacy of government of, by, and for the people is the crowning achievement of his brilliant career in public service and politics; and

WHEREAS, Ron Ramsey has lived the dream; Ron Ramsey continues to live the dream; and Ron Ramsey will always live the dream; 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 Lt. Governor Ron Ramsey for his twenty-four years of distinguished service as a member of this General Assembly and his outstanding ten years of leadership as Speaker of the Senate, commend his ongoing commitment to the prosperity of all Tennesseans, and wish him all the best as he continues his remarkable life's journey.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we recognize and pay tribute to Ron Ramsey as the longest-serving Republican Speaker of the Senate in Tennessee history.

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