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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 458

Offered February 6, 2003

Recognizing Arthur Robert Ashe, Jr. on the tenth anniversary of his death.

Patrons—Marsh, Lambert, Blevins, Bolling, Byrne, Chichester, Colgan, Cuccinelli, Deeds, Edwards, Hanger, Hawkins, Houck, Howell, Lucas, Martin, Maxwell, Miller, K.G., Miller, Y.B., Mims, Newman, Norment, O'Brien, Potts, Puckett, Puller, Quayle, Rerras, Reynolds, Ruff, Saslaw, Stolle, Stosch, Ticer, Trumbo, Wagner, Wampler, Watkins, Whipple and Williams

WHEREAS, Arthur Robert Ashe, Jr., was born on July 10, 1943, in Richmond, Virginia, attended the Richmond City Public Schools, and, in 1966, graduated from the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA); and

WHEREAS, Arthur Robert Ashe, Jr., as a child, demonstrating astounding reflexes and rare talent and skill in tennis, aspired to become the world's greatest tennis player; and

WHEREAS, he never bent, wavered, or deviated from his goal, although racial and social standards in the South posed seemingly insurmountable obstacles to his aspirations; and

WHEREAS, buoyed by internal strength, the love and commitment of a dedicated and faithful family, and the support of his community, Arthur Robert Ashe, Jr. persevered, overcoming the hurdles placed in his path; and

WHEREAS, he was unrelenting in the pursuit of his dream and diligently honed his skills daily on the segregated tennis courts of the old Brookfield playground in Richmond; and

WHEREAS, his hard work and many sacrifices were evidenced in 1963 when he became the first African-American to be named to a U.S. Davis Cup team, and when, throughout his collegiate career as a student at UCLA, he won numerous tennis crowns, leading his team to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) tennis championship in 1965; and

WHEREAS, Arthur Robert Ashe, Jr. was ranked first among tennis champions in the world after capturing the U.S. Open as an amateur in 1968; and

WHEREAS, his other unparalleled accomplishments in tennis include winning the first Davis Cup title in five years for the United States in 1968, becoming the first African-American to reach the finals of the South African Open in 1973, winning the men's singles title at Wimbledon in 1975, and becoming the first retired athlete to be named Sports Illustrated's Sportsman of the Year in 1992; and

WHEREAS, after winning Wimbledon, failing health forced Arthur Robert Ashe, Jr. to forego competitions during the 1977 season; however, he returned to play professional tennis in 1978 and rose to the pinnacle of his profession again as a champion and finalist, and announced his return to the game in 1979 before retiring from competitive tennis due to ill health; and

WHEREAS, Arthur Robert Ashe, Jr. displayed his ability to live with and above the vicissitudes of life as he courageously and gracefully battled the HIV/AIDS virus that he contracted from a blood transfusion during open heart surgery; and

WHEREAS, until his death at age 49 on February 6, 1993, he remained active, sharing his tremendous gifts and talents with the people of this Commonwealth, the nation, and the world through tennis clinics for youth, his fight against apartheid, support of the rights of Haitians, AIDS education and awareness, and work with numerous other civic activities; and

WHEREAS, he had a courteous personality and exemplified propriety, etiquette, self-control, and objectivity, skills that he exercised superbly on the court that endeared him to many people and carried him far as an advocate for justice, equality, and human rights throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, as a loving father and husband, and as a greatly admired, respected, brilliant, and gifted athlete, Arthur Robert Ashe, Jr. was known for his intellect, class, style, and gentleness; and

WHEREAS, in his native Richmond, our native son is lovingly remembered and celebrated for establishing "Virginia Heroes," a mentorship pairing disadvantaged youth with artists and elected officials, for creating the "Hard Road to Glory Sports Hall of Fame," in Richmond's Jackson Ward, and he is honored by a 12-foot bronze statue in the heart of the city; and

WHEREAS, the lives of Virginians, and people throughout the nation and the world have been enriched by the life and great athletic talent of Arthur Robert Ashe, Jr., enabling us through his love of tennis and humankind to experience vicariously the exhilarating heights of success and empathy for the unfortunate and oppressed among us; and

WHEREAS, Arthur Robert Ashe, Jr., peerless champion, athlete, author, scholar, and gentleman, by his exemplary life has caused us to reflect more on what we can achieve with vision and perseverance; and

WHEREAS, in the decade since his death, the nation and world have recognized the value of his

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56 vision and have endeavored to make his dream of racial equality a reality; and

57 WHEREAS, we pause today, on the tenth anniversary of his death, to celebrate his life, embrace his
58 ideals, acknowledge his achievements and contributions, and appropriate his passion for education,
59 pursuit of excellence, and vision of justice and equality for all persons; now, therefore, be it

60 RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly recognize
61 Arthur Robert Ashe, Jr., the best ambassador that the game of tennis has ever had, on the tenth
62 anniversary of his death; and, be it

63 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for
64 presentation to Mrs. Jeanne-Marie Moutoussamy Ashe and Ms. Camera Ashe, wife and daughter of
65 Arthur Robert Ashe, Jr., so that they may be apprised of the esteem in which the Virginia General
66 Assembly holds him, and as a tribute to his legacy and contributions to this Commonwealth, the nation,
67 and the world.