

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA**  
**SESSION 2007**

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**SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION DRSJR85190-LG-372 (3/12)**

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Sponsors:     Senator Garrou.

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Referred to:

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1    A JOINT RESOLUTION HONORING THE LIFE AND MEMORY OF BENJAMIN  
2       SYLVESTER "BEN" RUFFIN, JR., FORMER CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF  
3       GOVERNORS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA.

4       Whereas, Benjamin Sylvester "Ben" Ruffin, Jr. was born in Durham on  
5    December 11, 1941, to Catherine and Benjamin S. Ruffin; and

6       Whereas, Ben Ruffin graduated from Hillside High School in 1960 and then  
7    attended North Carolina Central University, during which time he worked at a tailor  
8    shop to help pay for books and learned how to alter his clothes; and

9       Whereas, Ben Ruffin received a bachelor's degree from North Carolina  
10   Central University in 1964 and then later earned a master's degree from the University  
11   of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; and

12      Whereas, Ben Ruffin committed himself thereafter to fight to improve the  
13   housing, jobs, and education of Durham's low-income neighborhoods; and

14      Whereas, Ben Ruffin was selected by Governor Jim Hunt to be the director of  
15   the North Carolina Human Relations Council in 1977 and then special assistant to  
16   minority affairs in 1978; and

17      Whereas, Ben Ruffin was praised by the Honorable James B. Hunt, Jr. as  
18   being "...one of the most effective leaders of our state in the last half-century. Ben's  
19   death is a special loss to me. He's probably the hardest working person with whom I  
20   ever worked. People said at the time he was the only person who outworked the  
21   governor"; and

22      Whereas, under Ben Ruffin's leadership the number of African-American  
23   judges in North Carolina increased from two to 17; and

24      Whereas, Ben Ruffin also distinguished himself in the private sector, working  
25   for N.C. Mutual Life and R.J. Reynolds, and, as retired Reynolds executive Marshall  
26   Bass said, his "magnetic personality," impressed all who came into contact with him;  
27   and

1           Whereas, Ben Ruffin held numerous leadership posts throughout his proud  
2 life, including being a member of the Board of Directors of the Research Triangle  
3 Foundation of North Carolina; and

4           Whereas, Ben Ruffin was appointed to the Board of Governors of The  
5 University of North Carolina in 1991 and in 1998 was elected to be the chair of that  
6 board; and

7           Whereas, Ben Ruffin holds the distinction of being the first  
8 African-American chair of the Board of Governors; and

9           Whereas, Ben Ruffin strove to promote public education within the State, and  
10 his work as chair of the Board of Governors "will positively impact the lives of the  
11 people of North Carolina for generations to come"; and

12           Whereas, Ben Ruffin, as the Honorable Jim Hunt acknowledged, "...worked  
13 tirelessly to see that everyone could be a part of the North Carolina dream"; and

14           Whereas, Ben Ruffin was to all who worked with him and knew him, "the  
15 personification of intelligence, commitment and compassion"; and

16           Whereas, Ben Ruffin received honorary degrees from North Carolina Central  
17 University and North Carolina A&T University in recognition of his lifework; and

18           Whereas, Ben Ruffin was the recipient of the NAACP Kelly M. Alexander  
19 Humanitarian Award, the Donald H. McGannon Citation by the National Urban League,  
20 the North Carolina Association of Black County Officials Frederick Douglas Leadership  
21 Award, and the Blackbook Award by Dollars and Sense magazine; and

22           Whereas, Ben Ruffin was a Life and Golden Heritage member of the  
23 NAACP, a Prince Hall Mason, and former pole march of the Winston-Salem Chapter of  
24 Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity; and

25           Whereas, Ben was an active member of Emmanuel Baptist Church and served  
26 as a Sunday school teacher and usher; and

27           Whereas, Ben Ruffin remained committed to the North Carolina Public  
28 University system after stepping down as its chair and remained filled with such zeal  
29 until his final moments; and

30           Whereas, Ben Ruffin died on December 7, 2006, at the age of 64; and

31           Whereas, Ben Ruffin is survived by his wife, Avon, and his two daughters,  
32 April and her husband Fred Adams, and Benita; Now, therefore,  
33 Be it resolved by the Senate, the House of Representatives concurring:

34           **SECTION 1.** The General Assembly honors the memory of Benjamin  
35 Sylvester Ruffin, Jr. and expresses the appreciation of this State and its citizens for his  
36 life and service.

37           **SECTION 2.** The General Assembly extends its deepest sympathy to the  
38 family and friends of Benjamin Sylvester Ruffin, Jr. and mourns the loss of this man  
39 and devoted public servant.

40           **SECTION 3.** The Secretary of State shall send a certified copy of this  
41 resolution to the family of Benjamin Sylvester Ruffin, Jr.

42           **SECTION 4.** This resolution is effective upon ratification.