

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 57

By Dickerson

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Cecil D. Branstetter of Bellevue, Tennessee.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Cecil D. Branstetter, an esteemed member of the bar and founding partner of Branstetter, Stranch & Jennings, PLLC; and

WHEREAS, Cecil Branstetter was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, respected and admired by his clients and his peers in the legal community, Mr. Branstetter is widely considered one of the best litigators in the history of both the Nashville and Tennessee Bar associations; and

WHEREAS, over the course of his distinguished legal career, Mr. Branstetter litigated many high-profile criminal and civil matters, and is known best for his tireless representation of working people, organized labor, and his efforts to halt the attempted closing of the Highlander Folk School during the Civil Rights Movement; in addition, he was a member of the commission that wrote Metro's charter in 1961 and 1962, the year Nashville and Davidson County voters agreed to consolidate the sometimes overlapping city and county governments into one entity, which was a groundbreaking move; and

WHEREAS, Cecil Branstetter grew up in Deer Lodge in Morgan County, Tennessee, one of the poorest counties in the State; at age eighteen, he left home carrying all of his possessions in a cigar box to enroll at Lincoln Memorial University in Harrogate, Tennessee, and became the first member of his family to attend college; and

WHEREAS, he worked his way through college by milking cows in the school's dairy every morning and evening; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Branstetter took a leave of absence from school for military service during World War II, and returned on the G.I. Bill to finish college at George Washington University; he studied at Oxford University in England before attending Vanderbilt University Law School, where he graduated near the top of his class in 1949; and

WHEREAS, a dedicated public servant, Cecil Branstetter served one term in the Tennessee General Assembly in the early 1950s, and while in the legislature introduced and sponsored legislation to allow women to serve on juries; Mr. Branstetter was never afraid to champion unpopular causes when he believed they were right, even if he was subjected to ridicule for his positions; and

WHEREAS, he volunteered his time, talents, and leadership acumen to his community by serving on numerous boards, including the Metropolitan Action Commission, the Metropolitan Human Rights Commission, and the Tennessee Civil Liberties Union; Mr. Branstetter was a founder and president of the Tennessee Environmental Council, president of the Tennessee Conservation League, and president of the Council of Community Agencies; and

WHEREAS, Cecil Branstetter rendered sterling service as president of the junior section of the Tennessee Bar Association, a member of the Tennessee Supreme Court's Board of Professional Responsibility, and a fellow of the Nashville Bar Foundation and the Tennessee Bar Foundation; in addition, he was listed in "The Best Lawyers in America" in several practice areas; and

WHEREAS, in 2005, Vanderbilt University Law School named its new Litigation & Dispute Resolution Program for Mr. Branstetter, and, in 2009, he was honored with the Distinguished Alumnus Award from Vanderbilt University; and

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

WHEREAS, he enjoyed the loving companionship of his wife of sixty-nine years, Charlotte, and was the proud parent of four children and doting grandfather of ten; and

WHEREAS, Cecil D. Branstetter 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 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 Cecil D. Branstetter, 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 Cecil D. Branstetter.

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