

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA**

**SESSION 1989**

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**SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 1332**

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Sponsors: Senators Rauch, Marvin, and Harris.

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Referred to: Rules and Operation of the Senate.

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July 26, 1989

1 A JOINT RESOLUTION HONORING THE LIFE AND MEMORY OF BASIL LEE  
2 WHITENER, FORMER NORTH CAROLINA CONGRESSMAN.

3 Whereas, Basil Lee Whitener was born in York County, South Carolina, in  
4 1915, to the late Levi and Laura Barrett Whitener; and

5 Whereas, Basil Lee Whitener attended Gaston County public schools,  
6 graduated from Lowell High School in 1931, and Rutherford College in 1933, attended  
7 the University of South Carolina from 1933 until 1935, and graduated from Duke Law  
8 School in 1937; and

9 Whereas, Basil Lee Whitener married Harriet Priscilla Morgan of Union,  
10 South Carolina, and of that marriage four children were born: John Morgan Whitener,  
11 Laura Lee Whitener Cloninger, Basil Lee Whitener, Jr., and Barrett Simpson Whitener;  
12 and

13 Whereas, Basil Lee Whitener joined the United States Navy in 1942, served  
14 in World War II as a Naval gunnery officer in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic,  
15 which earned him a personal commendation from the Secretary of the Navy for  
16 distinguished service, and separated from the military in 1945 with the rank of  
17 lieutenant; and

18 Whereas, Basil Lee Whitener served the Democratic party as president of the  
19 North Carolina Young Democrats from 1946 until 1947, as a delegate to the Democratic  
20 National Conventions of 1948 and 1960, and as chairman of the Young Democratic  
21 National Convention in November of 1949; and

22 Whereas, Basil Lee Whitener served in the North Carolina House of  
23 Representatives in 1941; and

1           Whereas, Basil Lee Whitener was elected to the 85th Congress in November  
2 1956, and was reelected to the 86th, 87th, 88th, 89th, and 90th Congresses, where he  
3 served on the Judiciary and District of Columbia Committees; and

4           Whereas, while as a member of Congress, Basil Lee Whitener sponsored or  
5 co-sponsored 119 measures, of which 23 were enacted as sponsored, nine were enacted  
6 into law in other bills, and 15 others passed the House but were not acted upon in the  
7 Senate; and

8           Whereas, Basil Lee Whitener's legislation included: the Omnibus Crime Law  
9 of 1967; the Wage Earner's Act of 1958; the Gifts to Minors Act; the Uniform  
10 Partnership Act; an Act to Prohibit Flag Desecration; a States Rights Bill; an Act to  
11 Allow Compensation for Counsel for Indigents in Federal Courts; legislation to make it  
12 a federal crime for a parent of a minor child to flee from the state with the intent to  
13 evade supporting his child or children; and

14           Whereas, Basil Lee Whitener's Rapid Transit and Subway Act created the  
15 modern subway and bus transportation system in the District of Columbia, which earned  
16 him the title, "Father of the D.C. Subway System"; and

17           Whereas, Basil Lee Whitener was recognized by his peers in the House of  
18 Representatives as a fine constitutional scholar who fought to protect the domestic  
19 textile industry from the floods of foreign imports, who fought to protect and broaden  
20 federal benefits for social security and veterans pension recipients, who supported all  
21 appropriations for national defense, who personally handled hardship cases involving  
22 members of the Armed Services, and who at the personal request of President Johnson  
23 made an inspection tour of military operations in Vietnam and reported back to the  
24 President; and

25           Whereas, Basil Lee Whitener served his community as the organizer and first  
26 president of the Gastonia Junior Chamber of Commerce in 1938, as vice president of the  
27 North Carolina Junior Chamber of Commerce from 1940 to 1941 and president of that  
28 organization from 1941 to 1942, as a member of the Kiwanis, Elks, American Legion  
29 40 and 8, and Veterans of Foreign Wars, as a Mason, as a member of the York and  
30 Scottish Rite bodies, as a Shriner, and as chairman of Board of Advisors and Board of  
31 Trustees of Belmont Abbey College; and

32           Whereas, Basil Lee Whitener was president of the Gaston County Bar  
33 Association in 1950, a member of the North Carolina General Statutes Commission in  
34 1946, appointed to the North Carolina Commission to Study Improvement of Justice  
35 from 1947 to 1949 by the governor, a member of the Judicial Conference of the Fourth  
36 Federal Judicial Circuit, and the North Carolina Tercentenary Commission; and

37           Whereas, Basil Lee Whitener received Honorary Doctor of Laws Degrees  
38 from Belmont Abbey College in 1960 and from Pfeiffer College in 1965, the  
39 "Watchdog of the Treasury" award from the National Association of Businessmen, Inc.,  
40 and the Merit Medallion presented by the Patriotic Order of Sons of America in 1966;  
41 and

42           Whereas, Basil Lee Whitener was a member of the First United Methodist  
43 Church of Gastonia and served on its official board; and

1           Whereas, Basil Lee Whitener died on March 20, 1989, leaving family and  
2 friends to mourn his loss;

3 Now, therefore, be it resolved by the Senate, the House of Representatives concurring:

4           Section 1. The General Assembly wishes to honor the life and memory of  
5 Basil Lee Whitener and expresses the gratitude and appreciation of this State and its  
6 citizens for his life and service to his community and to North Carolina.

7           Sec. 2. The General Assembly extends its sympathy to the family and friends  
8 of Basil Lee Whitener for the loss they have suffered.

9           Sec. 3. The Secretary of State shall transmit a certified copy of this resolution  
10 to the family of Basil Lee Whitener.

11          Sec. 4. This resolution is effective upon ratification.