**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO CONGRATULATE GRIER U. BLACKWELDER, PRESIDENT OF THE GREATER SUMTER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, UPON THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT, TO RECOGNIZE AND COMMEND HIS OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO SUMTER COUNTY AND SOUTH CAROLINA, AND TO WISH HIM CONTINUED SUCCESS AND HAPPINESS IN ALL HIS FUTURE ENDEAVORS.

Whereas, the South Carolina House of Representatives has learned that Grier U. Blackwelder, president of the Greater Sumter Chamber of Commerce, soon will retire from a distinguished thirty‑one year tenure at that organization, the past seventeen years of which he served as its president; and

Whereas, in preparation for his life’s work, the native of Norwood, North Carolina earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration from Pfeiffer University, and later completed graduate‑level studies in organizational management from the United States Chamber of Commerce Center for Organizational Management at the University of Georgia; and

Whereas, after beginning his working career as a cost accounting analyst with Collins & Aikman Corporation in Albemarle, North Carolina, he later served as general manager of the Stanly County Chamber of Commerce in Albemarle from 1979 until he joined the Greater Sumter Chamber of Commerce as its general manager in 1984; and

Whereas, after fourteen years of service as general manager, Mr. Blackwelder became president of the Greater Sumter Chamber of Commerce in 1998. Flourishing under his distinguished leadership, the Chamber has seen its membership soar from 650 in 1998 to 1,150 and its budget grow from $498,000 to $700,000, the latter due to his diversification of the Chamber’s streams of income; and

Whereas, under Grier Blackwelder’s leadership, the endeavors of the Greater Sumter Chamber of Commerce, including its annual Chamber Leadership Class that grooms new generations of community stewards and role models, have played an indispensable role in the revitalization of downtown Sumter, an area that had deteriorated from an exodus of merchants and other businesses to a mall and other areas of the city. Today, downtown Sumter boasts a healthy variety of new businesses, and plans are in development for a major hotel complex, a parking garage, restaurants, bars, and a movie theatre; and

Whereas, a widely respected leader in his field, Mr. Blackwelder has served as president of the Carolinas Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives, and was named the South Carolina Chamber Executive of the Year for 2002; and

Whereas, Mr. Blackwelder’s contributions to the Sumter community extend beyond his work at the Chamber, and include unifying the business community to successfully support passage of a Penny for Progress sales tax and to successfully support passage of Sunday alcohol sales in Sumter; and

Whereas, fundamental to the success of the Greater Sumter County Chamber of Commerce’s mission has been the highly successful working relationship that Grier Balckwelder helped forge between the community and its largest employer, Shaw Air Force Base; and

Whereas, a member of Trinity United Methodist Church, he is married to the former Jo Talbert of Albemarle, and together they have reared a fine son, Bill Blackwelder; and

Whereas, the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives are grateful for the years of unparalleled dedication that Grier Blackwelder has devoted to economic development in Sumter County and to the Palmetto State through his work at the Greater Sumter Chamber of Commerce and in the community, and wish him many years of enjoyment in his well‑earned retirement. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, congratulate Grier U. Blackwelder, president of the Greater Sumter Chamber of Commerce, upon the occasion of his retirement, to recognize and commend his outstanding contributions to Sumter County and South Carolina, and to wish him continued success and happiness in all his future endeavors.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to Grier U. Blackwelder.

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