

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2013**

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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 882*

Sponsors: Senators Blue, Stein, Apodaca (Primary Sponsors); and Brock.

Referred to:

June 23, 2014

1 A JOINT RESOLUTION HONORING THE LIFE AND MEMORY OF MARTIN LUTHER
2 NESBITT, JR., FORMER MEMBER OF THE NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL
3 ASSEMBLY.

4 Whereas, Martin Luther Nesbitt, Jr., was born in Asheville, North Carolina, on
5 September 25, 1946, to Martin Luther Nesbitt, Sr., and Mary Cordell Nesbitt; and

6 Whereas, Martin Luther Nesbitt, Jr., graduated from Reynolds High School in 1964
7 and attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, earning a B.A. in 1970 and a law
8 degree in 1973; and

9 Whereas, Martin Luther Nesbitt, Jr., practiced law in Asheville and served his
10 profession as a member of the Buncombe County Bar Association, the North Carolina Bar
11 Association, and the North Carolina Academy of Trial Lawyers; and

12 Whereas, Martin Luther Nesbitt, Jr., served with honor and distinction as a member
13 of the North Carolina General Assembly, where he represented the citizens of Buncombe
14 County for 31 years; and

15 Whereas, Martin Luther Nesbitt, Jr., was appointed to fill the unexpired term of his
16 mother, Representative Mary C. Nesbitt, in 1979, then went on to serve 11 terms in the House
17 of Representatives between 1981 to 1994 and 1997 to 2004 and five terms in the Senate from
18 2004 to 2014; and

19 Whereas, as a State representative, Martin Luther Nesbitt, Jr., served as cochair of
20 the Appropriations Committee, under House Speaker Dan Blue, and the Joint Select State
21 Health Insurance Committee and was a member of several other committees, including Courts,
22 Justice, Constitutional Amendments & Referenda; Finance; Judiciary II; Science and
23 Technology; and the Joint Legislative Commission on Governmental Operations; and

24 Whereas, as a State senator, Martin Luther Nesbitt, Jr., served as both Senate
25 Majority and Minority Leader; was chair of the Judiciary I Committee and the Select
26 Committee on Economic Recovery and vice chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee on
27 Health and Human Services and Mental Health and Youth Services; and was a member of
28 several other Senate committees, including Appropriations/Base Budget; Commerce,
29 Education/Higher Education, Finance, Health Care, and Rules and Operations of the Senate;
30 and

31 Whereas, Senator Nesbitt was described by Senator Dan Blue as "a Giant figure,
32 having a sense of Mountain populism that ran through him and he sensed that his major charge
33 was to look out for the average everyday person"; and as a leader he "came to work every day
34 with the same values: stick up for the little guy; fight to give every North Carolinian a



1 meaningful education, quality healthcare, and a chance for a good job; and never back down
2 from a fight"; and

3 Whereas, Representative Susan Fisher remembers speaking with Senator Nesbitt:
4 "he and I both spoke of the honor of holding the seat once held by the first woman elected to
5 the North Carolina Legislature; Lillian Exum Clement, but for me it is also an honor to have
6 been appointed to the seat held by Martin Nesbitt, a man from the mountains who worked
7 every day to improve the lives of his people"; and

8 Whereas, during his tenure in the General Assembly, Senator Nesbitt became the
9 body's expert in the area of health and human services, especially Medicaid; and

10 Whereas, Senator Nesbitt was instrumental in reforming the State's mental health
11 care system and in providing health care for those in need and children through programs like
12 the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP); and

13 Whereas, concerned for his beloved Western North Carolina, Senator Nesbitt
14 sponsored the Clean Smokestacks Act, promoted ridge law legislation, worked to secure
15 funding for the North Carolina Arboretum, and helped to start AdvantageWest, which has
16 promoted economic development in Western North Carolina for over 20 years; and

17 Whereas, some of Senator Nesbitt's other accomplishments include helping to create
18 the Western North Carolina Agricultural Center, upgrading facilities at public schools, and
19 providing access to quality universities and community colleges; and

20 Whereas, Senator Nesbitt was an advocate for the Mountain Area Health Education
21 Center (MAHEC) and a leader on health issues across the State as demonstrated by his work
22 with the MAHEC nurse practitioner certificate program and through his support of the creation
23 of the Center for Healthy Aging; and

24 Whereas, Senator Nesbitt was a supporter of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee
25 Indians, who deemed him a friend and an ally to their Tribe and a dedicated servant of North
26 Carolina; and

27 Whereas, Senator Nesbitt also served in many capacities on a number of boards and
28 commissions, including as a member of the North Carolina Child Health Task Force and North
29 Carolina Center for Nursing Advisory Council; as chair of the Holocaust Education Program;
30 and as director of the Buncombe County Unit of the American Cancer Society, the Mediation
31 Center, and the Western North Carolina Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association; and

32 Whereas, Senator Nesbitt enjoyed his work at the North Carolina General
33 Assembly, but he also enjoyed what North Carolina gave to him: NASCAR. He was an avid
34 race fan. He saw an opportunity to bridge his love for NASCAR with his senatorial work by
35 organizing the General Assembly's Pit Crew Challenge. It's only fitting that he will have a race
36 in his honor, "The Sen. Martin Nesbitt Memorial Race," at Newport Motor Speedway on June
37 21, 2014. Senator Nesbitt has been a supporter of the Speedway and a part of the Southeast
38 Super Truck Series where he supported his son Mart's racing efforts and then his granddaughter
39 Taylor's racing career. Newport Motor Speedway has dubbed him "Our Racing
40 Representative"; and

41 Whereas, Senator Nesbitt was a member of the St. Luke's Episcopal Church; and

42 Whereas, Senator Nesbitt was a devout family man and a fair but tough statesman,
43 who served the State of North Carolina with extraordinary dedication and tenacity; and

44 Whereas, Senator Nesbitt died on March 6, 2014, at the age of 67, but the day
45 before he died, returned to Asheville to a hero's welcome, riding in an ambulance escorted by
46 sheriff's deputies as well-wishers lined the road waving "Get Well Soon" signs and American
47 flags; and

48 Whereas, Senator Nesbitt leaves to cherish his memory his wife of 35 years, Deane
49 S. Nesbitt; a son, Martin Nesbitt; a stepson, Chad Nesbitt; a sister, Mary Ann Dotson-Silvey;
50 and two grandchildren; Now, therefore,

51 Be it resolved by the Senate, the House of Representatives concurring:

- 1 **SECTION 1.** The General Assembly honors the memory of Martin Luther Nesbitt,
- 2 Jr., and expresses the appreciation of this State and its citizens for the service he rendered.
- 3 **SECTION 2.** The General Assembly extends its deepest sympathy to the family of
- 4 Martin Luther Nesbitt, Jr., for the loss of a beloved family member.
- 5 **SECTION 3.** The Secretary of State shall transmit a certified copy of this
- 6 resolution to the family of Martin Luther Nesbitt, Jr.
- 7 **SECTION 4.** This resolution is effective upon ratification.