

Senator Meekhof offered the following resolution:

Senate Resolution No. 114.

A resolution of tribute offered as a memorial for Robert VanderLaan, former member of the Senate.

Whereas, It is with great sorrow that we learned of the passing of Robert VanderLaan, a member of this legislative body from 1963 to 1982. He will be remembered as a statesman, a successful businessman, and a true gentleman; and

Whereas, Robert VanderLaan was born in Dutton, Michigan, and spent nearly his entire life in western Michigan. He attended the one-room Smith School and Grand Rapids Christian High School before earning degrees at both Calvin College and the University of Michigan; and

Whereas, Robert VanderLaan had a lifelong passion for politics. He began his career as a political science teacher. At the same time, he worked his way up from the grassroots and was identified as a rising star in the Michigan Republican Party. He was a delegate to every Republican state convention beginning in 1952 and served as Paris Township (now city of Kentwood) trustee, clerk, and supervisor. In 1962, he was elected to the State Senate, defeating a long-serving incumbent. He served his constituents in the Thirty-first District with distinction for twenty years, as Senate Majority Leader from 1970 to 1974, and as Senate Minority Leader from 1979 to 1982; and

Whereas, Robert VanderLaan was a leader in the state legislature throughout some challenging and formative times. Serving with integrity and putting his Dutch work ethic into practice, Robert VanderLaan's leadership skills were evident as he formed coalitions, forged compromises, developed solutions to complex problems, and worked effectively with members from both sides of the aisle. He demonstrated grace under pressure and steady leadership, working with Governors Romney and Milliken through two recessions when the state economy was faltering and unemployment was rising. As Majority Leader, Robert VanderLaan was able to guide legislation through a Senate evenly divided along party lines; and

Whereas, Robert VanderLaan was extremely active crafting legislation and engaging in dialogue with colleagues. He sponsored legislation on campaign reform, raising the minimum wage, and allowing public school buses to transport students to private schools. He also supported the controversial establishment of the state's first income tax. He served on the committees on Senate Administration and Rules, State and Veterans' Affairs, Finance, the Legislative Council, and as chairman of the committees on Labor and Senate Business. He also was involved with and held office in many government leadership organizations, including the National Conference of State Legislative Leaders, the State Legislative Leaders Foundation, and the Executive Committee of the Council of State Governments; and

Whereas, Following his time in the Michigan Senate, Robert VanderLaan remained a fixture in state politics. He united in bipartisan partnership with former Speaker of the House Bobby Crim and founded one of Lansing's best known lobbying firms, Governmental Consultant Services, Inc. He served as chairman of the company for twelve years; and

Whereas, Today, we honor the memory of Robert VanderLaan, an accomplished public servant whose legacy of leadership will long continue to enrich our state; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate, That we offer this expression of our highest tribute to honor the memory of Robert VanderLaan, a member of this legislative body from 1963 to 1982; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the VanderLaan family as evidence of our lasting esteem for his memory.