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**HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 402**

Offered February 15, 2008

*Commending the Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership on the occasion of its 15th anniversary.*

Patrons—Cosgrove, McClellan, Alexander, Bulova, Ebbin, Lewis, Marshall, D.W., Mathieson, Nutter, Peace, Shannon, Sickles, Valentine and Vanderhye; Senators: Howell, Hurt and Northam

WHEREAS, in 2008 the Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership at the University of Virginia celebrates the 15th anniversary of its founding; and

WHEREAS, the Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership was founded in 1993 by Charlottesville businessmen Leigh Middleditch and Michael Bills as the Virginia Leadership Institute, and the organization took the name of generous benefactor Thomas C. Sorensen in 1997, shortly before he passed away; and

WHEREAS, a nonpartisan organization dedicated to improving the quality of governance and the strength of civic engagement throughout Virginia, the Sorensen Institute was created to identify, educate, and inspire emerging leaders from across the Commonwealth through a variety of innovative programs; and

WHEREAS, the Sorensen Institute's programs include a flagship Political Leaders Program, a Candidate Training Program, and two programs for youth: the College and High School Leaders Programs; and

WHEREAS, at the heart of each program of study are three central themes—the value of ethics in public service, an in-depth appreciation for the public policy challenges facing the Commonwealth, and the power of bipartisanship and cooperation in politics; and

WHEREAS, the Sorensen Institute aims to create ethical, principled leaders who are eager to put aside partisan stereotypes and work cooperatively with others who have different political affiliations to improve the quality of life for all Virginians; and

WHEREAS, the Sorensen Institute has over 1,000 outstanding graduates of its various programs, including 16 graduates, two state senators and 14 delegates, who serve in the 2008 Virginia General Assembly; six graduates who serve in Governor Kaine's cabinet; dozens more who have been appointed to boards and commissions; nearly 100 who have been elected to local office; and many more who serve in critical positions of leadership in nonprofits, local governments, and in the private sector; and

WHEREAS, a record number of Sorensen Institute alumni ran for public office in the November 2007 elections, and 48 graduates were successful at the polls, including 16 Republicans, 16 Democrats, and 12 Independents; and

WHEREAS, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching recently spotlighted the Sorensen Institute's youth programs as among the very best in the nation and something of a national model when it comes to giving young people the skills and motivation to become politically engaged in their communities; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Jefferson wrote, "Come forward then and give us the aid of your talents and the weight of your character towards the new establishment of [democracy]," and the Sorensen Institute, its board members, staff, and many alumni are proud to work in this Jeffersonian tradition; and

WHEREAS, Virginians can indeed be proud of the work of the Sorensen Institute, the premier national model of successful bipartisan leadership training; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly commend and congratulate the Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership on the occasion of its 15th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership as an expression of the General Assembly's gratitude for its many outstanding programs and commitment to educate and inspire the future leaders of the Commonwealth.

INTRODUCED

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