Senate Resolution No. 226

BY: Senator HARCKHAM

MOURNING the death of Willis H. Stephens, distinguished citizen, proud veteran, and devoted New York State Assemblyman

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to pay tribute to citizens of the State of New York whose lifework and civic endeavor served to enhance the quality of life in their communities and this great Empire State; and

WHEREAS, Willis H. Stephens of Brewster, New York, died on October 17, 2024, at the age of 99; and

WHEREAS, Willis H. Stephens distinguished himself in his profession and by his sincere dedication and substantial contribution to the welfare of his community; and

WHEREAS, A graduate of Brewster Schools and of The Lawrenceville School, a college preparatory school, Willis H. Stephens enrolled at Princeton University as a member of the Class of 1947, but deferred the start of his college education to enlist in the United States Army Air Corps where he served as a flight instructor and, before discharge, attained the rank of 2nd Lieutenant; and

WHEREAS, At the end of World War II, Willis H. Stephens returned to Princeton and was conferred a Bachelor of Arts Degree in 1950, majoring in Economics; and

WHEREAS, After college, Willis H. Stephens joined Maust Coal and Coke Corporation, brokers of industrial fuels; in 1959, he formed The W. H. Stephens Corporation and continued in the business of selling coal and oil to major industries and utilities in the northeastern United States for the next thirty years; and

WHEREAS, On November 24, 1951, Willis H. Stephens married Daphne Dunbar in Marblehead, Massachusetts, and later established their home in Brewster, New York, where they raised their four beloved sons; and

WHEREAS, In 1952, following in his father's footsteps, Willis H. Stephens was elected to the New York State Assembly representing Putnam County and parts of Dutchess and Westchester Counties; he served honorably in the State Legislature for thirty years, retiring in 1982; and

WHEREAS, During his tenure, Willis H. Stephens served on numerous legislative committees and, at the pinnacle of his career in politics, was named Chairman of the powerful Assembly Ways & Means Committee and, later, as Ranking Member of that committee; and

WHEREAS, Known for his ability to work cooperatively with legislators on "both sides of the aisle," Willis H. Stephens proved

himself to be a valuable member of the State Legislature, helping navigate New York State through often trying fiscal and turbulent social times; and

WHEREAS, During his professional career, Willis H. Stephens served as a member of numerous corporate boards, including National Bank of North America and, after its merger with National Westminster Bank PLC, a British banking conglomerate, NatWest USA, Greenwich Savings Bank, Continental Copper and Steel Corporation, City Title Insurance Company, and Putnam Hospital Center; he also served as a Trustee of Trinity-Pawling School in Pawling, New York; and

WHEREAS, During his lifetime, Willis H. Stephens was a member of many business, civic, and philanthropic organizations, including the New York Coal Trades Association, the Town of Southeast Industrial Development Agency, and American Legion Post 71 in Brewster; he was a charter member of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, Lodge 2101, the Brewster Rotary Club, and the Putnam County Fish & Game Club, among others; and

WHEREAS, Willis H. Stephens was most proud of his membership on the Olympic Organizing Committee for the 1980 Winter Olympic games at Lake Placid, New York and his role in helping bring the Winter Olympics back to Lake Placid; and

WHEREAS, A lifelong outdoorsman, Willis H. Stephens enjoyed many years of hunting and fishing in the Adirondack Mountains and in Canada; he was an avid golfer and enjoyed playing the sport with family, friends, and business associates throughout his lifetime; and

WHEREAS, Willis H. Stephens' commitment to excellence, and his spirit of humanity, carried over into all fields of enterprise, including charitable and civic endeavors; and

WHEREAS, Willis H. Stephens is survived by his sons, Daniel (Sharon), Willis Jr. (Virginia), Gardner, and Jonathan (Kristin); six grandchildren, Daniel M. Stephens III (Elspeth), Andrew (partner Matt), Kelly (Trevor), Willis III (Samantha), James "Mac," and John "Jack"; seven great grandchildren; brother, Mallory (Dolores); nieces, Grace, and Diana; and a nephew, Mallory (Claudia); he was predeceased by his dear sister Alice Schneckenburger and his loving wife Daphne; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a sense of compassion, Willis H. Stephens leaves behind a legacy which will long endure the passage of time and will remain as a comforting memory to all he served and befriended; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourning the death of Willis H. Stephens, distinguished citizen, veteran, and devoted member of his community; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Willis H. Stephens.