

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2013**

**H**

**1**

**HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1271\***

---

Sponsors: Representative Fisher (Primary Sponsor).

*For a complete list of Sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly Web Site.*

---

Referred to:

---

June 24, 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 House of Representatives, the Senate 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.