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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 333

Senate Amendments in [] — February 6, 2007

Commending Native Americans and African Americans on their contributions to the Commonwealth and American life.

Patron Prior to Engrossment—Senator Marsh

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, from the beginning, thousands of years before recorded history and European contact, indigenous peoples have populated the North and South American continents, and thousands of Native Americans lived in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, Native Americans have always been an integral part of Virginia and American history, without whom the first Europeans who arrived in North American during the 16th and 17th centuries could not have survived; and

WHEREAS, for many years, the rich inventiveness of Native Americans was not acknowledged or celebrated; however, archeological evidence indicates that many contributions to modern society were either first invented or used by Native Americans living in North and South America, including: development of ways to treat raw latex to make usable items from rubber as early as 1700 B.C.; expert use of botanical medications to treat medical conditions; performance of plastic surgery, skin grafts, and removal of fluid from the chest cavity and knees; use of boiled water and botanical antiseptics on wounds; cultivation of nearly 75 percent of the many varieties of food grown in the world today and medicinal uses for at least 2,564 species of plants; and

WHEREAS, Native American contributions to the humanities include oral literary traditions, art, sculpture, beadwork, music, poetry, and literature, and well-known words that have been appropriated into the English language such as Chicago, Seattle, caucus, Podunk, toboggan, and high-muck-a-muck, and the Iroquois taught that in every deliberation the impact of decisions should be considered on the next seven generations; and

WHEREAS, the world has been inspired and enhanced by the gifts and talents of Jim Thorpe, one of the world's greatest athletes, and by the creative and artistic abilities of personalities such as Burt Reynolds, Cher, Maria Tallchief, Mykelti Williamson, Wayne Newton, Benjamin Bratt, and Lou Diamond Phillips; and

WHEREAS, Native Americans have bravely defended American principles of freedom and democracy with their lives, particularly the Navajo Code Talkers' heroic and distinguished service during World War II, and at the close of the 20th century, there were nearly 190,000 Native American veterans, the highest record of service per capita when compared to other ethnic groups; and

WHEREAS, today in Virginia, there are eight tribes and two small reservations—the Pamunkey Indian Tribe and the Mattaponi Indian Tribe in King William County—which date back to the 1600s, 2,500 people on the tribal registers, and approximately 15,000 people of Native American ancestry; and

WHEREAS, according to the Virginia Council on Indians, six other incorporated groups—Chickahominy Indian Tribe in Charles City County; Eastern Chickahominy Indian Tribe in New Kent County; Monacan Indian Tribe in Amherst County; Nansemond Indian Tribal Association in the City of Chesapeake; Rappahannock Indian Tribe in Essex, Caroline, and King and Queen Counties; and the Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe in King William County—are officially recognized as Indian tribes by the Commonwealth and are seeking federal recognition; and

[WHEREAS, there are several Native American tribes in Virginia that have petitioned for state recognition by the Commonwealth and other Native Americans that are not a part of a specific tribe; and]

WHEREAS, "America's first peoples have endured and remain a vital cultural, political, social, and moral presence, and have contributed certain values and ideas that have become ingrained in the American spirit: the knowledge that humans can thrive and prosper without destroying the natural environment; the understanding that people from very different backgrounds, cultures, religions, and traditions can come together to build a great country; and the awareness that diversity can be a source of strength rather than division," stated William J. Clinton, President of the United States, on the occasion of National American Indian Heritage Month in 1996; and

WHEREAS, America is "a nation of immigrants," and the rich history of African Americans predates their importation to American soil over 400 years ago; and

WHEREAS, the historical experience of Americans of African descent began more than 5,000 years before the Christian Era, with notable scientists, mathematicians, and inventors such as Imhotep, who is

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59 recognized by contemporary historians as the first architect, a pioneer in mathematics, an eminent sage
60 and patron of scribes, a respected leader among early Egyptian and Greek civilizations, builder of the
61 first pyramid, and the physician upon whose knowledge and teachings about human anatomy and the
62 functions of the major organs modern medicine rests; and

63 WHEREAS, although the vast majority of African Americans have been educated to believe that
64 there have been only three great civilizations in the world—Greek, Roman, and British Empire—the
65 African-American history and experience overflows with great achievements and the creation of
66 magnificent empires, nations and civilizations, and is characterized by outstanding leaders, statesmen,
67 inventors, builders, scientists, doctors, historians, craftsmen, philosophers, artisans, musicians, explorers,
68 scholars, and militarists; and

69 WHEREAS, African Americans have earned an undeniable role in the development of this
70 Commonwealth and the nation, and, with home a tender and distant memory, by the sweat of their brow
71 under the master's whip built American towns and cities, roadways and railways, buildings and facilities,
72 served the owners of farms and great plantations, and cultivated the land to enable the survival of and to
73 perpetuate a quality of life to which their owners were privileged; and

74 WHEREAS, too many discoveries and contributions of African Americans to the world are absent
75 from history books, have been ignored, marginalized, or denied by the majority culture, and significant
76 inventions and scientific discoveries that enrich the quality of life for all mankind were prohibited by
77 law to be patented, and continue to be shrouded in misinformation and misrepresentation; and

78 WHEREAS, the ethos of this rich and proud people, descendants of kings and queens, has been
79 passed down to generations through whispered tales by a remnant of African-American ancestors who
80 understood the relationship between honor, respect, and appreciation of heritage and culture, and the
81 vision and success of future generations; and

82 WHEREAS, it is with this spirit that we recognize and celebrate the creative genius and contributions
83 of Annie Easley, Sharon J. Barnes, Thomas L. Jennings, Dr. Benjamin S. Carson, David Blackwell,
84 David N. Crosthwait, Elijah McCoy, Clarence A. Ellis, Phillip Emeagwali, Charles R. Drew, Sarah E.
85 Goode, Granville T. Woods, Lewis H. Latimer, Meredith C. Gourdine, Ernest E. Just, Evelyn Boyd
86 Granville, Norbert Rillieux, Mae C. Jemison, George Carruthers, Garret A. Morgan, J. Ernest Wilkins,
87 Sarah Boone, Aaron Douglas, Claude Clark, Marian Anderson, Count Basie, Louis Armstrong, Miles
88 Davis, Thomas A. Dorsey, Barbara Jordan, Vernon Johns, Colin Powell, W.E.B. Du Bois, Sojourner
89 Truth, Hiram R. Revels, and numerous other African Americans whose great achievements represent a
90 vast pool of untapped intellect and gifts; and

91 WHEREAS, it is vital that young Native Americans and African Americans be revitalized and
92 challenged with the message that they descend from the loins of a proud and noble people who expected
93 and settled for nothing less than excellence in every endeavor, and whose greatness is an indelible mark
94 on the Commonwealth, nation, and the world; and

95 WHEREAS, it is fitting, with the advent of the commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the first
96 permanent English settlement in Jamestown in 2007, that the Commonwealth acknowledge and
97 recognize the significant achievements and contributions of Native Americans and African Americans,
98 sons and daughters of the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

99 RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That Native Americans and African
100 Americans be commended on their contributions to the Commonwealth and American life; and, be it

101 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the
102 Executive Secretary of the Virginia Council on Indians, the Executive Secretary of the National
103 Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Virginia State Chapter, the Superintendent of
104 Public Education, the President of the Virginia Parents and Teachers Association, and the President of
105 the Virginia Education Association, requesting that they further disseminate copies of this resolution
106 among their respective constituents so that they may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly
107 in this matter.