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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 793

Offered January 19, 2001

Requesting the Governor to direct that busts of Pocahontas and Ballard T. Edwards be made and displayed in the old House Chamber in the Capitol.

Patrons—Marshall, Diamonstein, Jones, J.C., Katzen, McQuigg and O'Brien

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, Pocahontas was an Indian princess, the daughter of Powhatan, the powerful chief of the Algonquin Indians in the Tidewater region of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, Pocahontas played a significant role in the history of Henrico County, the Commonwealth of Virginia and America; and

WHEREAS, as a compassionate young girl in 1607, she saved the life of Captain John Smith and many other colonists, and saw to it that the colonists received food from the Indians so that the Jamestown Settlement would not become another "Lost Colony"; and

WHEREAS, in 1616, John Smith wrote that Pocahontas was "the instrument to pursue this colonie from death, famine, and utter confusion"; and

WHEREAS, Pocahontas not only served as a representative of the Virginia Indians, but also served a vital link between the Native Americans and the Englishmen, a contribution that has no doubt stood out in Virginia history; and

WHEREAS, Ballard T. Edwards was one of the most influential black political and inspirational leaders in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, a prominent and respected brickmason, plasterer and contractor, Ballard T. Edwards was the descendant of a free black family; and

WHEREAS, after the Civil War, Mr. Edwards and his wife opened, at their own expense, the Ballard School, which taught hundreds of former slaves to read and write and the useful and economically productive trade of bricklaying; and

WHEREAS, for eight years, he served as a member of the House of Delegates, representing the Counties of Chesterfield and Powhatan and the Town of Manchester, and was the unanimous choice of both blacks and whites in the Republican Party to represent his district; and

WHEREAS, his first act upon taking his seat was the introduction of a bill to ban segregation on public transit conveyances in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, in 1870, after the tragic collapse of the gallery of the old House Chamber that killed 63 people, there was a bill introduced to tear down the capitol and replace it "with a temple of state suitable to the esteem of this great Commonwealth"; and

WHEREAS, with his intimate knowledge of sound construction and with a eye for history, Ballard T. Edwards, made an impassioned speech, begging legislators to spare and rehabilitate the Capitol, pointing out to the economy-minded that the building could be remodeled and restored to a safe and attractive condition for far less than the cost of a new Capitol and reminding the history-minded of the sacred connections the building had with George Washington, Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, and James Monroe; and

WHEREAS, his second legislative victory was his crusade for a free (toll free) bridge across the James River, named the Ninth Street Bridge, which stood from 1873 until it was demolished in 1973 and replaced by the new Manchester Bridge; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Edwards did not seek reelection in 1877, but devoted the remainder of life serving his community, his state, and his people; and

WHEREAS, the significant contributions of both Pocahontas and Ballard T. Edwards to the Commonwealth are worthy of public honor and recognition; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Governor be requested to direct that busts of Pocahontas and Ballard T. Edwards be made and displayed in the old House Chamber in the Virginia State Capitol.

INTRODUCED

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