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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 299

Offered January 25, 2002

*Honoring the memory of Carrie Buck.*

Patrons—Van Yahres, Almand, Amundson, Armstrong, Barlow, Baskerville, Bland, Brink, Christian, Councill, Crittenden, Darner, Hall, Hull, Johnson, Jones, D.C., Jones, J.C., Keister, Melvin, Miles, Moran, Petersen, Phillips, Plum, Pollard, Scott, Shuler, Spruill, Stump, Van Landingham, Watts and Woodrum; Senators: Colgan, Deeds, Howell, Puller and Saslaw

WHEREAS, in 1924 Virginia passed two eugenics-related laws, the second of which permitted involuntary sterilization, the most egregious outcome of the lamentable eugenics movement in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, under this act, those labeled "feeble-minded," including the "insane, idiotic, imbecile, feeble-minded or epileptic" could be involuntarily sterilized, so that they would not produce similarly disabled offspring; and

WHEREAS, May 2, 2002, is the 75th anniversary of the United States Supreme Court decision in the case of Buck v. Bell, in which Virginia's 1924 Eugenical Sterilization Act was allowed to stand; and

WHEREAS, following the Buck decision, an estimated 60,000 Americans, including about 8,000 in Virginia, were sterilized under similar state laws, and the decision was applauded by German eugenicists who supported comparable legislation early in the Nazi regime; and

WHEREAS, in 1927 Carrie Buck, a poor and unwed teenage mother from Charlottesville, was the first person sterilized under the provision of the 1924 law; and

WHEREAS, subsequent scholarship has demonstrated that the Sterilization Act was based on the now-discredited and false science of eugenics; and

WHEREAS, legal and historical scholarship analyzing the Buck decision has condemned it as an embodiment of bigotry against the disabled and an example of the use of faulty science in support of public policy; and

WHEREAS, that scholarship has also pointed out the fallacies contained in the Buck opinion, noting, among other points, that Carrie Buck's daughter, Vivian, the supposed third-generation "imbecile," later won a place on her school's honor roll; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly in 2001 expressed its "profound regret" over the Commonwealth's role in the eugenics movement in this country and over the damage done in the name of eugenics; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly honor the memory of Carrie Buck on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Buck v. Bell Supreme Court decision.

ENGROSSED

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