

## 2002 SESSION

ENROLLED

### SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 139

*Designating June 19, in 2002 and each succeeding year, as Vietnamese American Freedom Fighters Day in Virginia.*

Agreed to by the Senate, March 4, 2002

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 28, 2002

WHEREAS, during the Vietnam War, from the 1960s to 1975, many Vietnamese men and women fought alongside the United States in defending freedom; and

WHEREAS, the Armed Forces of the Republic of South Vietnam suffered enormous casualties during the Vietnam conflict; and

WHEREAS, from 1961 to 1975, almost eight hundred thousand Vietnamese men and women were wounded and over a quarter of a million Vietnamese men and women were killed in action; and

WHEREAS, these men and women have made the ultimate sacrifice; they died fighting for freedom and democracy in their homeland; and

WHEREAS, their sacrifices were never given the proper recognition; and

WHEREAS, they should be commended for their courage in the face of severe hardship and adversity; and

WHEREAS, after the fall of Saigon, the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam forcibly rounded up the former officers and enlisted personnel of the former Republic of Vietnam, as well as political leaders, intellectuals, teachers and artists and sent them to the so-called "re-education camp"; and

WHEREAS, in these prisons, they were often humiliated, tortured, and beaten, causing some to die from their injuries; and

WHEREAS, while they were being imprisoned, their families were discriminated against in their own country, deprived of their human and civil rights; banned from employment and their children banned from schools; and

WHEREAS, to date, they are still being considered an "enemy" of the state, they were not given access to jobs, education, and proper medical treatment; and

WHEREAS, the end of the Vietnam conflict produced an exodus of over two million Vietnamese seeking political asylum in the free world; and

WHEREAS, they risked treacherous seas, pirate attacks, hunger, and dehydration, preferring to die rather than to live under communism; and

WHEREAS, many of these "boat people" came to the United States to resettle and are now proud Vietnamese Americans; and

WHEREAS, in the past twenty-seven years, the Vietnamese American Community has been successful in rebuilding their lives in Virginia, contributing to the economic growth and culture of the Commonwealth while not forgetting those who fought in the name of freedom; and

WHEREAS, traditionally, the former Republic of Vietnam celebrated June 19th as a day to commemorate and honor both the fallen and the living heroes who have dedicated, and are continuing to dedicate their lives, to bring international attention to the lack of human rights and freedom in Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, it is the day on which the Vietnamese American Community memorializes those who gave their lives and recognizes the prisoners of conscience for their commitment and sacrifice in the struggle for freedom and democracy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That June 19, in 2002 and in each succeeding year, be hereby designated as Vietnamese American Freedom Fighters Day in Virginia.

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