

2006 SESSION

SENATE SUBSTITUTE

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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 170 AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the Senate Committee on Rules
on February 10, 2006)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Senator Houck)

Designating March 16, in 2006 and in each succeeding year, as Freedom of Information Day in Virginia.

WHEREAS, Founding Father James Madison was born on March 16, 1751, in Port Conway, Virginia, and upheld, in his writings and by his example in public office, the principle that knowledge concerning the actions of government is a public right and a goal of government itself; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Freedom of Information Act was enacted in 1968 to "ensure the people of this Commonwealth ready access to records in the custody of public officials and free entry to meetings of public bodies wherein the business of the people is being conducted"; and

WHEREAS, in 1991, the General Assembly designated March 16 as Freedom of Information Day in Virginia with the passage of SJR 176; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia General Assembly's commitment to open government was strengthened by its creation of the Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council in 2000 to encourage and facilitate compliance with the Freedom of Information Act at all levels of government in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, even though March 16 was declared as Freedom of Information Day in Virginia in 1991, its observance has been sparse and its importance overlooked; and

WHEREAS, James Madison correctly noted that "A popular Government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy; or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance; And a people who mean to be their own Governors, must arm themselves with the power which Knowledge gives"; and

WHEREAS, in the 21st century, we should reaffirm our commitment to open government principles for the benefit of all citizens of Virginia through speeches, publications, and appropriate public ceremonies on March 16 of every year; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly designate March 16, in 2006 and in each succeeding year, as Freedom of Information Day in Virginia; and be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate transmit a copy of this resolution to the Governor and the Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council so that the Governor and the members of the Council may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter; and, be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the Senate post the designation of this day on the General Assembly's website.

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