

2006 SESSION

ENROLLED

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 44

Commemorating the 220th Anniversary of the passage of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom by the General Assembly of Virginia.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 14, 2006
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 3, 2006

WHEREAS, the natural right to religious freedom is a critical foundation on which American democracy is built; and

WHEREAS, freedom from religious tyranny and strife has allowed the United States to thrive and prosper as a protector of liberty around the world; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, enacted by the Virginia General Assembly in 1786, was the first law in the history of the world to guarantee religious freedom and was the inspiration for the First Amendment in the United States Constitution's Bill of Rights; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom and the First Amendment represent an everlasting guarantee by Virginia and the United States that every individual shall be free to practice his or her faith unimpeded by the strictures of intolerance or government oversight and control; and

WHEREAS, Virginia, as the birthplace of the legal recognition of religious freedom, continues to believe in the importance of religious freedom and the Commonwealth's historical responsibility to educate others on the essential role that religious freedom plays in securing peace; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia General Assembly believes now, as it did when first adopting the Statute for Religious Freedom, that an individual's right to practice his faith as he chooses is of the greatest consequence for maintaining a just and free society; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia General Assembly wishes to recognize the Council for America's First Freedom and its planned First Freedom Center for its role in educating and promoting the understanding of the importance of religious freedom; and

WHEREAS, the First Freedom Center will stand on the very ground in Richmond, Virginia, where religious freedom was first professed by the Virginia General Assembly and will be America's premier religious freedom education center, providing insight into the role religious freedom has played in the past and will continue to play in the future; and

WHEREAS, January 16, 2006, marks the 220th anniversary of the Virginia General Assembly's adoption of the Statute for Religious Freedom; and

WHEREAS, commemoration of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom on the 220th year of its passage further reminds us of the compelling need to protect and ensure the rights, freedoms, and liberties to which all mankind is entitled; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the 220th Anniversary of the passage of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom be commemorated and the importance of religious freedom be recognized; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate transmit a copy of this resolution to the executive director of the Council for America's First Freedom, requesting that the Council further disseminate copies of this resolution so that all who read it will be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter.

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