

## 2007 SESSION

INTRODUCED

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### HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 689

Offered January 10, 2007

Prefiled January 10, 2007

*Requesting the Virginia Congressional Delegation to direct the National Park Service to study the feasibility of creating a Fort Monroe National Park.*

Patron—Gear

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the Army is scheduled to depart from Fort Monroe in September 2011, but a study completed for the National Park Service in 2006 shows that gateway cities adjacent to national parks reap windfall economic returns from tourism and both direct and indirect job creation, presenting the Commonwealth with a strategic opportunity; and

WHEREAS, Old Point Comfort has been regarded as an extraordinary place ever since Captain John Smith and the first permanent English settlers in America landed there in 1607 and afterward built Fort Algemoume to protect Jamestown, collect customs duties, and manage transatlantic commerce; and

WHEREAS, Virginia ceded jurisdiction of the site to the United States after the War of 1812 for construction of a great stone fortress, honoring President James Monroe, that would become the "Gibraltar of the Chesapeake" by denying hostile armadas access to our nation's capital; and

WHEREAS, Fort Monroe remained under Union control throughout the Civil War, enabling it to become "Freedom's Fortress" in 1861 after General Butler's "Contraband" ruling validated decisions of three African-Americans, and later thousands, to free themselves and seek sanctuary there; and

WHEREAS, the Secretary of the Interior brought historic resources at Fort Monroe under oversight of the National Park Service in 1960 by designating the post as a National Historic Landmark, making it a prime candidate for entry into the National Park System in case the Army should ever leave; and

WHEREAS, Fort Monroe, apart from its historic value, also features wetlands, green space, sand dunes, beaches, public access to the Chesapeake Bay, a bird sanctuary, a two-mile promenade along the shoreline, a deep water marina, and other natural resources found in national parks; and

WHEREAS, innovations over the last decade, in which a national park operates in partnership with a federal trust to reduce the need for appropriated funds, may have application at Fort Monroe; and

WHEREAS, preserving Fort Monroe as a National Park could result in the creation of a grand public place in the center of Hampton Roads; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Virginia Congressional Delegation be requested to direct the National Park Service to study the feasibility of creating a Fort Monroe National Park; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the General Assembly express its preference for early action by Congress to authorize and fund a National Park Service special resource study on the way best to preserve the historic, natural, scenic, and recreational resources at Fort Monroe.

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