

## SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 479

*Commemorating the settlement of Jamestown on the occasion of its 400th anniversary.*

Agreed to by the Senate, February 8, 2007

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 16, 2007

WHEREAS, on May 13, 1607, thirteen years before the Pilgrims landed in Massachusetts, three ships, the *Susan Constant*, the *Godspeed*, and the *Discovery*, carrying a group of 104 English men and boys arrived at a small peninsula of land along the banks of Virginia's James River to begin America's first permanent English colony; and

WHEREAS, the new settlers named the river James and the settlement Jamestown in honor of their sovereign King James I, who chartered the Virginia Company of London in 1606 to establish a viable and lucrative colony in America to increase British trade, compete with other European nations in expansion abroad, search for a northwest passage to the Orient, and convert the Indians to the Anglican religion; and

WHEREAS, led by Captain Christopher Newport, the Jamestown settlement was governed by a council of seven men, with one member chosen to serve as president; and

WHEREAS, the Jamestown settlement was built 36 miles inland from the Chesapeake Bay and was thought to be situated in an ideal location providing deep harbor, shelter from attack and easy defense, as well as safety from the Spanish ships traveling the coast; and

WHEREAS, instead, due to unfavorable conditions and outbreaks of disease, few skilled farmers and an insufficient labor force, and disputes with the Algonquian-speaking Indians who were ruled by the powerful Chief Powhatan, the Jamestown settlers suffered terrible hardships and barely managed to survive; and

WHEREAS, despite the odds against them, the citizens of the Jamestown settlement endured and the first two English women arrived at Jamestown in 1608, and although more women came in later years, men vastly outnumbered women for most of the 17th century; and

WHEREAS, in 1608, Captain John Smith became the colony's fourth council president, but by the fall of 1609 he was injured and left for England, never to return to Virginia; he promoted the colonies of North America until his death in 1631, and his detailed writings on his experiences in Jamestown illuminated the recorded history of the early settlers' determination to succeed in their new life in America; and

WHEREAS, during the winter of 1609-1610, the Jamestown settlement underwent a particularly dark period known as the "starving time" during which many English deaths occurred because of Indian hostilities, starvation, or disease; and just when the settlers had abandoned all hope of continuing the colony, a ship arrived from England with supplies; and

WHEREAS, only until the successful development of tobacco cultivation in 1613 by John Rolfe, who would later marry Powhatan's daughter Pocahontas, would Jamestown have a profitable cash crop to sustain and stimulate growth in the Virginia colony; and

WHEREAS, the first documented Africans in Virginia arrived in 1619 from the kingdom of Ndongo in Angola, where they had been captured during war with the Portuguese, and while believed to be treated as indentured servants in the early colonies, the practice of owning Africans as slaves for life would appear by mid-century; and

WHEREAS, the first representative body in the English New World, the General Assembly, convened on July 30, 1619, in the Jamestown church in response to orders from the Virginia Company "to establish one equal and uniform government over all Virginia" which would provide "just laws for the happy guiding and governing of the people there inhabiting"; and

WHEREAS, when the Virginia Company was dissolved in 1624, Virginia became a royal colony and Jamestown continued as the center of political and social life until 1699 when the seat of government was moved to Williamsburg; and

WHEREAS, the dreams, language, customs, government, culture, and beliefs that sprang from those early English settlers, molded by their arduous experiences and sacrifices at the Jamestown settlement, were quintessential to the founding of many of America's most cherished ideals, such as freedom of religion, representative government, free speech, cultural diversity, and free enterprise; and

WHEREAS, during the anniversary year in 2007, communities and organizations across the Commonwealth will develop unique programs commemorating their heritage, and Historic Jamestowne and Jamestown Settlement will offer all new permanent exhibits, premiere introductory films, and living-history areas portraying the dramatic story of 17th-century Virginia and its Powhatan Indian, English, and western central African cultural origins, drawing on a wealth of historical information that

has been revealed by archaeological and documentary research of the past decade; and

WHEREAS, many dedicated leaders and volunteers from across the Commonwealth have come together during the last decade to plan a commemoration of international significance and local, state, federal, and international entities have worked tirelessly to coordinate programming and events; and

WHEREAS, the 400th anniversary of Jamestown in 2007 is a historic opportunity for the citizens of the Commonwealth and visitors from far and wide to come to the Jamestown sites on the banks of Virginia's James River and experience firsthand its many contributions to the rich and diverse culture of America; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the settlement of Jamestown be commemorated on the occasion of its 400th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the generous and enthusiastic sponsors of the 400th anniversary of Jamestown in 2007, requesting that they further disseminate copies of this resolution to their respective constituents so that they may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter; and, be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the General Assembly encourage Virginians to support and commemorate the 400th anniversary of Jamestown in 2007 by participating in the numerous new exhibits, programs, and festive activities in communities across the Commonwealth that will increase awareness, knowledge, and enjoyment of the history of the Jamestown settlement in Virginia and its preeminent role in the origin of our nation for generations to come.