

2008 SESSION

ENROLLED

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 171

Designating June 22, 2008, as the Battle of Craney Island Day in Virginia.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 12, 2008
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 25, 2008

WHEREAS, on June 22, 1813, during the only land action in Virginia during the War of 1812, substantial British military forces made a formidable attempt to capture the Cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth and the Gosport Shipyard; and

WHEREAS, in early 1813, British admirals Sir George Cockburn and Sir John B. Warren planned an attack on the naval shipyards at Norfolk with the hope of capturing the city and the prized 36-gun frigate USS *Constellation*; and

WHEREAS, in an effort to withstand the attack, Brigadier General Robert B. Taylor, who commanded the Virginia Militia stationed in Norfolk, had his men hastily build defenses around Norfolk and Portsmouth, commandeer ships to create a barrier across the Elizabeth River, and build fortifications on Craney Island at the mouth of the Elizabeth River near Hampton Roads; and

WHEREAS, the *Constellation* was effectively blockaded by the British in Norfolk Harbor, so the crew left their ship to help man the redoubts, and along with two companies of light artillerymen, 150 brave Americans stood ready to defend the fortifications on Craney Island; and

WHEREAS, on June 22, 1813, a British landing crew of 700 men rowed to the western shore of Craney Island, and the Americans, realizing they were not flying a flag, quickly raised the American flag over the breastworks, and then fired with deadly accuracy upon the British until they were forced to fall back; and

WHEREAS, the British launched a second attack against the eastern shore of Craney Island, and a company of light artillery, under the command of Captain Arthur Emmerson, held their fire until the precise moment when the British were within range and most vulnerable; and

WHEREAS, the Americans then opened fire with a devastating force, repelling and defeating the British attackers, who fled to their ships having suffered the tremendous loss of 91 men and three boats; and

WHEREAS, the brave Americans successfully defended Craney Island and scored a glorious and decisive victory over the superior British forces; and

WHEREAS, the victory at the Battle of Craney Island prevented the British from capturing the Cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth, which once taken may have led to the occupation of all of Hampton Roads for the duration of the war, as well as provided the British Royal Navy with a strategic operating base in America; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly designate June 22, 2008, as the Battle of Craney Island Day in Virginia, commemorating the only land action in Virginia during the War of 1812, which saved the Cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth from invasion by the British; and, be it

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

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