ENROLLED

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 343

Commemorating the bicentennial of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, 16th President of the United States.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 10, 2009
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 20, 2009

WHEREAS, on February 12, 2009, the nation will commemorate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, 16th President of the United States, considered by many citizens to have been the greatest American President; and

WHEREAS, Abraham Lincoln, sketching out his life five months before receiving his party's nomination for President, wrote, "I was born Feb. 12, 1809, in Hardin County, Kentucky. My parents were both born in Virginia, of undistinguished families—second families, perhaps I should say"; and

WHEREAS, Abraham Lincoln has extensive family ties to the Commonwealth as his great-grandparents and grandparents lived in Virginia; his parents met, married, and lived for a time in the Shenandoah Valley; his great-grandparents and multiple relatives are buried in Virginia in the Lincoln Cemetery in Rockingham County; during the Civil War, Lincoln's family in Virginia were slave owners and Confederates; and he visited Petersburg and Richmond, the Confederate capital, in April 1865, just a few days prior to his death; and

WHEREAS, Abraham Lincoln, a central figure in American history, fervently resolved to preserve the nation, and the National Commission on the Bicentennial of Abraham Lincoln stated that "he wished not only to save his country, but also to make it worthy of the saving, a place where all would have the right to rise"; and

WHEREAS, at the dedication of the military cemetery at Gettysburg he rededicated the nation to freedom and democracy, stating, "The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth," and the principles that he espoused remain a core part of the American value system; and

WHEREAS, as president and commander-in-chief of these United States at a time when the Union was torn asunder, Abraham Lincoln guided the country through the most devastating experience in its national history, and on December 3, 1861, he addressed the Congress: "The struggle of today is not altogether for today—it is for a vast future also," apparently understanding, predicting, and warning future generations that the reverberations of the Civil War and the struggle for human rights would persist well into our own time; and

WHEREAS, the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, created by Congress to inform the public and lead the nation in the commemoration of the 200th anniversary of his birth, stated that on "January 1, 1863, President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, setting into motion a legal process that destroyed American slavery, and this noble act, controversial both then and now, committed the United States to the long, difficult struggle for racial justice"; and

WHEREAS, The Lincoln Society of Virginia, the only such group in the former Confederacy, honors Lincoln on February 12 each year in an event that has been held at the Lincoln Homestead and Cemetery in Rockingham County for the past 33 years; and

WHEREAS, under the leadership of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission, the Commonwealth has visibility, presence, and prominence among the states and with the federal government in the planning for this singular national event, the commemoration of the bicentennial of the birth of the 16th President of the United States; and

WHEREAS, many states have already initiated commemorative programs and events, and several have been planned in the Commonwealth throughout the national commemorative period of 2009-2010, involving collaboration between various local governments, state and local agencies, professional and community organizations, and other interested parties; and

WHEREAS, given the national observance of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, the relevance of his legacy today, and that his presidency is fundamentally woven into the historical and social fabric of the Commonwealth, it is fitting and appropriate that the Commonwealth join with the nation to commemorate the bicentennial of his birth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly commemorate the bicentennial of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, 16th President of the United States; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Governor be requested to join with the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission to call upon the people of the Commonwealth to participate in the commemorative programs and events offered throughout the nation and the Commonwealth to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln and to remember his leadership, vision, contributions, and extraordinary efforts to preserve the Nation in the face of great personal peril and sacrifice; and, be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the Senate transmit a copy of this resolution to the Superintendent of Public Instruction; the Chancellor of the Virginia Community College System; the Executive Director of the State Council of Higher Education; the President of the Lincoln Society of Virginia; the President of the Ministers' Conference of Richmond and Vicinity; the Librarian of Virginia; the Executive Director of the Valentine Richmond History Center; the Executive Director of the American Civil War Center at Historic Tredegar; the Honorable Dwight C. Jones, mayor of the City of Richmond; the Honorable Annie M. Mickens, mayor of the City of Petersburg; and the Honorable Scott K. York, chairman of the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors, requesting that they each 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.