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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 121

Offered January 11, 2012

Prefiled January 11, 2012

Designating the month of May, in 2012 and in each succeeding year, as Horse Month in Virginia.

Patron—Sickles

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, horses and humans have an ancient relationship; the horse was essential in many societies until the discovery of the engine and continues to hold a place of honor in many cultures, often linked to heroic exploits in war; and

WHEREAS, while most horses are domestic, others are feral and can be found in many places throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, in Virginia, horses were originally valued for their strength and ability to carry or pull heavy loads; however, few horses in Virginia today are work animals, but are valued for personal recreation and professional horse racing; and

WHEREAS, the more than one billion dollar equine industry in Virginia boasts such renowned thoroughbreds as Secretariat, the 1973 Triple Crown winner born and bred at Meadow Farm in Caroline County, and Misty of Chincoteague Island on Virginia's Eastern Shore; and

WHEREAS, Virginia is known for its love of horses and even for some less notable steeds, including Robert E. Lee's horse, "Traveller," Thomas Jonathan "Stonewall" Jackson's "Old Sorrel," Major General J. E. B. Stuart's "Virginia," Major General Fitzhugh Lee's "Nellie Gray," W. I. Rasin's "Beauregard," and "Fleeter," the horse of Belle Boyd, famous Confederate spy; and

WHEREAS, horses are Virginia's eighth top agricultural commodity, and a recent study by the Weldon Cooper Center at the University of Virginia disclosed the following: "The horse industry in Virginia has an annual economic impact of \$1.2 billion...the equine industry's influence is felt in all parts of the state with very positive effect on jobs, recreation, tourism, retail sales and state and local taxation...The horse industry in Virginia generated \$65.3 million in state and local taxes in 2010...The largest areas of economic impact are in Northern Virginia with more than 1,600 horse-related jobs in Fauquier and Loudoun Counties alone...However, the largest employment impact in the state is in Rockbridge County—the location of the Virginia Horse Center in Lexington"; and

WHEREAS, nearly 939,000 people attended 1,200 Virginia horse shows and competitions in 2010, generating \$25 million in revenue, and out-of-state participants spent an average of \$3,100 per event in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, Virginia ranks twelfth nationally in number of horses in the state, according to estimates by the American Horse Council, with an estimated 215,000 equines and some 41,000 equine operations based in the state; and

WHEREAS, the National Agricultural Statistics Service has reported an increase in horse ownership, attendance at horse events, and the number and variety of shows and competitions, and that the equine industry accounted for 16,091 jobs in 2010; and

WHEREAS, the equine industry stimulates tourism in Virginia and generated about \$65.3 million in state and local taxes in 2010, with \$37.5 million allocated to the state and \$27.8 million to localities; and

WHEREAS, horse owners in Virginia spend about \$873 million each year on horse-related expenditures, including feed, bedding, boarding, training, tack, capital improvements, and labor, and with an estimated 215,000 horses in the state, these expenses come to an average of \$4,060 per horse; and

WHEREAS, galloping, trotting, whinnying, and neighing, horses capture our imagination and enhance our lives, and have contributed to human history and legendary exploits and conquests; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and appropriate to recognize the role of horses in human history and their contributions to the quality of life and economy of Virginia; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly designate the month of May, in 2012 and in each succeeding year, as Horse Month in Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates post the designation of this month on the General Assembly's website.

INTRODUCED

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