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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 131

Offered January 20, 2012

Designating February 12, in 2012 and in each succeeding year, as Abraham Lincoln Day in Virginia.

Patron—Marsh

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, on February 12, 2009, the nation commemorated 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 is a central figure in American history, and he is inextricably and forever a part of the social fabric of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, Abraham Lincoln's roots run deep within the Commonwealth, and his great-grandparents, grandparents, and parents 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 at the Lincoln Family Homestead in Rockingham County; there are Lincoln descendants living in the Shenandoah Valley today. During the Civil War, Lincoln's family in Virginia were slave owners and Confederates, and he visited several Virginia localities, including Petersburg and Richmond, the Confederate capital, in April 1865, just a few days prior to his death; and

WHEREAS, Abraham Lincoln fervently resolved to preserve the nation, and he desired "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, Abraham Lincoln 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, 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, Abraham Lincoln's sacrifices and fervent determination to preserve the experiment in democracy birthed in the union of states called the United States of America should be illuminated and remembered, especially on the occasion of the sesquicentennial of the American Civil War and of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 2013; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly designate February 12, in 2012 and in each succeeding year, as Abraham Lincoln Day in Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Governor be requested to call upon the citizens of the Commonwealth to commemorate this day with appropriate tributes, programs, and events that honor the memory and legacy of Abraham Lincoln; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate transmit a copy of this resolution to Dr. Phillip Stone, President of the Lincoln Society of Virginia, Dr. Patricia I. Wright, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Peter A. Blake, Interim Director of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, requesting that they further disseminate copies of this resolution to their respective constituents

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59 so that members of the organization and agencies may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly
60 of Virginia in this matter; and, be it
61 RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the Senate post the designation of this day on the General
62 Assembly's website.