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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 877

Offered February 12, 2013

Commending Gum Springs.

Patron—Surovell

WHEREAS, Gum Springs, the oldest historically black community in Fairfax County, will proudly celebrate its 180th anniversary in 2013; and

WHEREAS, Gum Springs, named after a gum tree that once marked the community's location near Mount Vernon, traces its origins to a freedman, West Ford, who was born on the Bushfield Plantation in Westmoreland County circa 1784; and

WHEREAS, West Ford was the son of a female mulatto slave, Venus, who was owned by George Washington's brother, John Washington, and his wife, Hannah; as a young boy, he often served as a personal attendant to George Washington; and

WHEREAS, John Washington's sons, Bushrod and Corbin, made a gift of West Ford to their mother, Hannah, when their father died; Hannah Washington then decreed in her last will and testament for West Ford to be set free at the age of 21; and

WHEREAS, around 1806, West Ford was granted his freedom and, a few years later, he married Priscella Bell; the couple had four children, William, Daniel, Jane, and Julia, who were educated at Mount Vernon; and

WHEREAS, when Bushrod Washington died, he willed 160 acres of land adjacent to Mount Vernon to West Ford; two years later, West Ford sold the land and purchased 214 acres nearby, which became the black community of Gum Springs; and

WHEREAS, Gum Springs served as a haven for freed and runaway slaves during and after the Civil War; its residents began to build homes and establish their economic independence with the help of the Freedmen's Bureau and the Quaker community; and

WHEREAS, Gum Springs community members farmed the land and established themselves in trades learned while estate slaves; the Freedmen's School was established in 1867 at Bethlehem Baptist Church to educate residents of Gum Springs; and

WHEREAS, in 1890 the Reverend Samuel K. Taylor, William Belfield, Lovelace Brown, Hamilton Gray, Robert D. King, Henry Randall, and Nathan Webb formed the Joint Stock Company of Gum Springs and sold lots; and

WHEREAS, Gum Springs continued to grow and thrive over the next century, with its members working in a variety of occupations, raising their families, and serving the community; and

WHEREAS, today, Gum Springs has more than 2,500 residents, many of whom are descendants of the original inhabitants, who thrive in a vigorous black community located outside the nation's capital; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Gum Springs on the occasion of its 180th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Gum Springs Historical Society and Museum as an expression of the General Assembly's congratulations and admiration for the community's many contributions to the Commonwealth.

INTRODUCED

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