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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 354

Offered January 17, 2013

Extending state recognition to the United Cherokee Indian Tribe of Virginia, Incorporated.

Patron—Newman

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the 1983 Session of the General Assembly passed House Joint Resolution No. 54 recognizing the existence within the Commonwealth of certain named Indian tribes and also acknowledging the fact that members of other Indian tribes reside within the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the United Cherokee Indian Tribe of Virginia, Incorporated, commonly known as the Buffalo Ridge Band of Cherokee, was not among those tribes formally recognized in 1983; and

WHEREAS, Horace R. Rice, in his 1991 book, The Buffalo Ridge Cherokee: The Colors and Culture of a Virginia Indian Community, describes the rich historical legacy of the United Cherokee Indian Tribe of Virginia, Incorporated; and

WHEREAS, the United Cherokee Indian Tribe of Virginia, Incorporated, composed of about 650 members, is located in Madison Heights in Amherst County; and

WHEREAS, the members of the United Cherokee Indian Tribe of Virginia, Incorporated trace their ancestry back to Northumberland County, where the "king of Wiccocomico Indian Town," Robert Pinn, is considered the first ancestor chief and patriarch; and

WHEREAS, as the English encroached, the Northern Neck Indians left the area in search of new land for their people and mingled with other Indian tribes, including the Cherokee; and

WHEREAS, Robert Pinn's great-grandson, Raleigh, who had both Wiccocomico and Cherokee heritage, served briefly as an indentured servant before moving to the Buckingham County and Amherst County area; and

WHEREAS, Raleigh Pinn's work as a Native American farmer and experiences with white settlers as an indentured servant allowed him to become a successful farmer and Amherst County records from the late 1700s detail his land transactions; and

WHEREAS, Raleigh Pinn also served as a militia man with the Amherst County militia, eventually serving at the Battle of Yorktown; and

WHEREAS, even though Raleigh Pinn successfully assimilated in many ways into the white culture, he continued to honor his Native American heritage; and

WHEREAS, Raleigh Pinn formed two bands of mixed Cherokee and Wiccocomico on land he owned, one in Buckingham County and one at Buffalo Ridge in Amherst County; and

WHEREAS, Raleigh Pinn separated the bands so as to not alarm local white settlers with one large Cherokee settlement; he served as chief of both Cherokee bands for many years; and

WHEREAS, in 1991, the tribes were officially named the United Cherokee Indian Tribe of Virginia, Incorporated and today the two bands are led by Samuel H. Penn, Sr.; and

WHEREAS, in 2000, Samuel H. Penn, Sr., and a delegation from the United Cherokee Indian Tribe of Virginia, Incorporated were honored at a U.S. Department of Interior's National Park Service celebration of Native Americans who fought at Yorktown; and

WHEREAS, the United Cherokee Indian Tribe of Virginia, Incorporated and its descendants contributed and continue to contribute to the settlement and growth of the Commonwealth, have maintained their ethnic background, and number among themselves families with well-known names throughout the area and Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That from and after the effective date of this resolution, the Commonwealth of Virginia recognizes the existence within the Commonwealth of the United Cherokee Indian Tribe of Virginia, Incorporated; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate transmit a copy of this resolution to Chief Samuel H. Penn, Sr., of the United Cherokee Indian Tribe of Virginia, Incorporated, requesting that he further disseminate copies of this resolution to his constituents so that they may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Commonwealth, by this resolution, does not address the question of whether the tribe has been continuously in existence since 1776; and, be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Commonwealth, by this resolution, does not confirm, confer, or address in any manner any issues of sovereignty.

INTRODUCED

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