

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 455

Designating April 30, in 2013 and in each succeeding year, as South Vietnamese Recognition Day in Virginia.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 21, 2013
 Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 22, 2013

WHEREAS, South Vietnamese Americans, a proud, industrious people, make up the fourth-largest group of Asian Americans in the United States; and

WHEREAS, a South Vietnamese mass immigration to the United States began when communist tyranny swept the former Republic of Vietnam after the fall of Saigon in 1975; and

WHEREAS, to the very end, soldiers of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) fought valiantly, defending their freedom with skill, daring, and gallantry; the ARVN 3rd Cavalry Regiment, for example, demonstrated such skill and heroism in battle that it was awarded the coveted United States Presidential Unit Citation; and

WHEREAS, nearly 60,000 American fighters died in the Vietnam War and some 224,000 South Vietnamese troops also fell defending their nation; and

WHEREAS, although the American sacrifice in Vietnam was enormous, some of the most bitter combat—including the savage warfare after the United States' withdrawal—was shouldered principally by our South Vietnamese allies; and

WHEREAS, the 1968 communist Tet Offensive was designed to crack South Vietnam's will to resist, instead, South Vietnamese forces fought ferociously, and not a single unit collapsed or ran; indeed, even the police fought, turning pistols against heavily armed enemy regulars; and

WHEREAS, together with American soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines, the ARVN decimated the indigenous Viet Cong guerrillas, eliminating them as an effective fighting force for the remainder of the war; and

WHEREAS, most American units had left Vietnam by 1972, yet South Vietnamese units continued to perform remarkably well; with limited American help, they defeated North Vietnam's all-out Easter Offensive, a massive conventional invasion led by Soviet T-54 tanks; and

WHEREAS, the Easter Offensive victory helped force North Vietnam to accept a negotiated end to the war; and

WHEREAS, sadly, in 1974 the United States withdrew most military support, including air power, severely restricting the flow of fuel and munitions to the ARVN; strangled by a lack of supplies, tanks and artillery pieces were allotted meager quantities of ammunition—sometimes just a few shells per day—and radios often had no batteries; and

WHEREAS, the strangulation of South Vietnamese supply lines destroyed morale and decimated combat power, making it impossible for even the bravest South Vietnamese troops to effectively defend against the final invasion by North Vietnamese soldiers; North Vietnam remained well-supplied by its communist allies in China and the Soviet Union; and

WHEREAS, everyone with ties to the Americans or the government of the Republic of Vietnam feared the threatened communist reprisals; as communist forces overran the South during the spring of 1975, 125,000 key South Vietnamese personnel were airlifted from South Vietnam to refugee centers in the United States; and

WHEREAS, as American troops and embassy staff were evacuated by waiting aircraft, terrified South Vietnamese mothers thrust their babies into the hands of complete strangers, hoping their offspring might somehow survive the approaching bloodbath; and

WHEREAS, the promised reign of terror quickly emerged and the South Vietnamese desperately fled the murderous tyranny of the communists; roughly two million South Vietnamese fled to escape North Vietnam's promised "people's paradise"; and

WHEREAS, launching small, crowded sampans, many South Vietnamese sailed into the vast, treacherous waters of the South China Sea, where hundreds of thousands drowned in the escape attempt; the South Vietnamese continued to flee their country in huge numbers from 1975 until the mid-1980s; and

WHEREAS, beginning in 1975 and for decades afterwards, well over one million South Vietnamese—especially former military officers and government employees—were imprisoned in communist concentration camps; these were euphemistically called "reeducation camps," where many thousands of South Vietnamese were "educated" to their deaths; and

WHEREAS, the communist concentration camps were characterized by brutal forced labor, political indoctrination, and deadly assignments like human mine clearing; there were no formal charges or trials;

and

WHEREAS, the conditions in the camps were so savage that many surviving inmates estimate that almost a third of the prisoners of war died while in captivity; and

WHEREAS, South Vietnamese immigration to the United States peaked in 1992 when, after decades of torture, many concentration camp survivors were finally released and sponsored by their families to come to this country; and

WHEREAS, after persevering through unimaginable brutality and suffering, the South Vietnamese who escaped their homeland demonstrated admirable talent and intellect; they became an entrepreneurial, upwardly mobile group, whose poverty rate rapidly declined after their arrival in the United States; and

WHEREAS, today, 82 percent of the South Vietnamese in the United States are native-born or naturalized citizens, an exceptionally high portion of American citizenship for any immigrant group; and

WHEREAS, for several decades, South Vietnamese American patriots have contributed to the United States with intellect, skill, loyalty, and determination; many have served proudly in the Armed Forces of the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly designate April 30, in 2013 and in each succeeding year, as South Vietnamese Recognition Day in Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate transmit a copy of this resolution to the Virginia Asian Chamber of Commerce and the National Congress of Vietnamese Americans so that the members of these organizations may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter; and, be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the Senate post the designation of this day on the General Assembly's website.