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## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 135

Offered January 13, 2014

*Commending the First Freedom Center.*

Patrons—Carr, Loupassi and Peace

WHEREAS, in 2014, the First Freedom Center in Richmond celebrates its 30th anniversary of promoting and advancing the fundamental rights of freedom of religion and freedom of conscience; and

WHEREAS, the history of Virginia is inextricably linked with the establishment of these basic human rights; the first document espousing these beliefs, the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, was written by Thomas Jefferson in 1786 and was the forerunner to the First Amendment of the United States Constitution that ensured freedom of religion for all Americans; and

WHEREAS, the First Freedom Center was established in 1984 to commemorate the bicentennial of the Virginia General Assembly's adoption of the statute in 1786; the landmark vote occurred in a building in Richmond where the legislature had temporary quarters; and

WHEREAS, today, one of the goals of the First Freedom Center is to educate people about the significance and meaning of the rights that allow nations and their citizens to enjoy freedom of conscience without interference; and

WHEREAS, in the early part of the 21st century, the trustees of the First Freedom Center purchased the site where the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom was enacted two centuries ago; their goal is to establish an educational center to promote understanding and respect for these rights; and

WHEREAS, during the last decade, the center has been developed in phases; it opened in 2006 in renovated buildings with offices, exhibits, a classroom, and meeting space; and

WHEREAS, the final phase of the First Freedom Center is set for completion in 2014 and will feature enhanced exhibits and programs that study the progress made toward establishing freedom of religion and freedom of conscience around the world; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend the First Freedom Center for three decades of promoting rights that Virginians have enjoyed for more than two centuries—freedom of religion and freedom of conscience; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the First Freedom Center as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for promoting education about the establishment of freedom of religion and freedom of conscience for all people.

INTRODUCED

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