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HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 75**AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE**

(Proposed by the House Committee on Rules

on January 21, 2016)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Toscano)

Commending religious liberty and freedom from political persecution.

WHEREAS, from the arrival of the first settlers in the Americas, the United States was built on the belief that religious liberty was a paramount concern and that individuals of every heritage and faith tradition should strive to respectfully coexist with other religious and cultural groups; and

WHEREAS, the United States Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the American legal system provide the strongest guarantee of rights of any nation in the world, and chief among these are the free exercise of every individual's faith and the protections guaranteed to every American through the Equal Protection and Due Process clauses; and

WHEREAS, Virginians subscribe to Thomas Jefferson's codification of natural law, that "no man shall be . . . enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief, but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of Religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge or affect their civil capacities"; and

WHEREAS, the United States and other nations have experienced violent attacks by adherents to a perversion of Islam preached by a variety of discrete sects, each having distorted the teachings of that religion, a faith that has more than a billion peaceful adherents around the globe, including millions of loyal Americans here in the United States; and

WHEREAS, while the United States and the rest of the world must remain committed to defeating forces aligned with this perversion of Islam, no matter who they are or from where they wish to threaten us, we must always keep our focus on our actual enemy, which is neither the Islamic faith nor the billion Muslims around the world who wish to simply live and practice their religion in peace; and

WHEREAS, January 16, 2016, marks the 230th anniversary of the codification of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, by the Virginia House of Delegates, That religious liberty and freedom from political persecution be commended. Further, the House of Delegates reaffirms its commitment to the founding principles and freedoms embodied in Virginia's Statute for Religious Freedom, the United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That in concert with the peaceful adherents, community, and faith leaders of Islam, we commit ourselves anew to fighting those who would imperil American lives and undermine the liberties and principles upon which this nation was built; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That neither nationality nor ideology shall cause Virginia's commitment to individual freedoms, personal liberty, or the free exercise of religion as so eloquently expressed by Thomas Jefferson to waiver; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That in affirming our commitment to religious liberty and freedom, we also commit to principles that our nation remains open to individuals of all faiths who embrace our laws, and who seek a better life, free from political persecution; and, be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, 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 House of Delegates' celebration of the anniversary of the codification of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom and reaffirmation of the principles established therein.