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SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 37

Offered February 1, 2016

Commending the City of Newport News.

Patrons—Miller and Norment

WHEREAS, Newport News Park was dedicated on May 28, 1966, after the City of Newport News set aside thousands of acres of city-owned land in the watershed area of Newport News and York County for public recreation and enjoyment; and

WHEREAS, during the dedication ceremony, United States Senator A. Willis Robertson predicted that "in the course of time, this park will become one of the most attractive, as well as one of the most useful in the state"; and

WHEREAS, Newport News Parks, Recreation & Tourism was originally established to save open spaces, preserve historic sites, provide facilities for children and adults to play and relax, and designate areas where wildlife could continue to thrive; and

WHEREAS, Newport News Park receives more than two million visits annually and, at over 7,700 acres, holds the distinction of being one of the largest municipal parks in the entire country; it is a valuable asset not only to the City of Newport News and the Virginia Peninsula but also to the entire Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, Newport News Park is rich with recreational opportunities and offers more than 30 miles of hiking, biking, and equestrian trails; two freshwater, fishable lakes; a modern campground; picnic areas and playgrounds; two 18-hole golf courses and a disc golf course; a nature and history Discovery Center; facilities for bicycle, boat, canoe, and paddleboat rentals; an arboretum with an authentic Japanese teahouse; a model aircraft flying field; an outdoor performing arts center; an archery range; and a visitor information center; and

WHEREAS, Newport News Park is home to a full schedule of special events, including the annual Fall Festival of Folklife, Children's Festival of Friends, and the Commonwealth's first drive through holiday light display—the Celebration in Lights; these regional traditions account for more than 200,000 annual visitors to the Newport News area; and

WHEREAS, Newport News Park comprises a diverse ecosystem of forests, meadows, wetlands, and lakes; combined with the park's recreational opportunities, the natural beauty and tranquility serve to enhance the quality of life for residents of and visitors to the Virginia Peninsula; and

WHEREAS, Newport News Park is home to a wide variety of indigenous plants and animals, including more than 106 species of wildflowers, 284 species of birds, 25 species of amphibians, 103 species of trees and shrubs, 35 species of reptiles, 16 species of ferns, 17 species of freshwater game fish, and 31 species of mammals, along with a wealth of invertebrates, grasses, aquatic plants, and other plant and animal species; and

WHEREAS, Newport News Park preserves a number of historical features, including a National Register of Historic Places site that is situated on the hallowed grounds of the Union Army's only assault on Major General John B. Magruder's Warwick River lines; the park provides visitors with outstanding views of the strategic locations vital to the legacy of the Civil War in their untouched natural states; and

WHEREAS, the creation and operation of Newport News Park promotes regional travel and tourism in partnership with its gateway communities, providing jobs and contributing to the economic vitality of the region; and

WHEREAS, Newport News Park is deserving of the recognition and continued support of citizens throughout the Commonwealth to preserve its ecological and cultural integrity, maintain its recreational viability, and protect its scenic views for generations to come; and

WHEREAS, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Newport News Park, the City of Newport News has planned special programs and stewardship activities throughout 2016 to enable residents to reconnect with and enjoy this outstanding public asset; and

WHEREAS, Senator Robertson's prediction that Newport News Park would become one of the most attractive and useful parks in the Commonwealth has been and continues to be fully realized; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate of Virginia, That the City of Newport News hereby be commended on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the opening of Newport News Park; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare copies of this resolution for presentation to the Mayor and City Council of Newport News as an expression of the Senate of Virginia's respect and appreciation for the city's 50 years of stewardship in protecting and managing this

INTRODUCED

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**59** outstanding public treasure.