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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 573

Offered January 11, 2017

Prefiled January 2, 2017

Designating January 14, in 2018 and in each succeeding year, as Pongal Day in Virginia.

Patrons—Bulova, Hugo and Watts

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, Pongal, also known as Thai Pongal, is one of the main festivals celebrating the importance of the harvest in the state of Tamil Nadu in southern India; and

WHEREAS, similar to Thanksgiving Day in the United States, Pongal is a festival of thanksgiving to mother nature, the earth, farm animals, and the sun in the form of Lord Suryan for the resources necessary for a bountiful yield of crops; and

WHEREAS, Pongal is a four-day festival that typically begins on January 14 and ends on January 17; the festival is exemplified by the phrase in the Tamil language Thai Pirandhaal Vazhi Pirakkum, meaning the beginning of the Thai month will open avenues for a better life; and

WHEREAS, on the first day of Pongal, called Bhogi festival in honor of Lord Indra, people welcome prosperity by cleaning and throwing away old and unwanted items to make way for new things; the first day is often celebrated with a bonfire; and

WHEREAS, the second day of Pongal focuses on the worship of Lord Suryan (Sun) and is celebrated with puja rituals, colorful kolam/rangoli decorations, offerings of sugarcane, and cooking the Ponga, a sweet made of rice; and

WHEREAS, the third day of Pongal, known as Mattu Pongal, celebrates the importance of farm animals to the harvest, especially cows; animals are decorated and worshipped and the day is replete with rituals; and

WHEREAS, the final day of Pongal, known as Kanum Pongal, is spent relaxing and visiting family members and friends; many families take leisure trips on this day, and elders often treat younger members of the family with gifts to show their love; and

WHEREAS, the Indian American community makes many important contributions to economic growth in the Commonwealth, with highly educated professionals and entrepreneurs who work in a variety of fields, open new businesses, and create jobs, all the while continuing to observe and celebrate their rich cultural heritage; and

WHEREAS, Pongal Day brings together members of the Indian American community as they celebrate with gatherings, decorations, and special foods; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly designate January 14, in 2018 and in each succeeding year, as Pongal Day in Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates post the designation of this day on the General Assembly's website.

INTRODUCED

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