

2019 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 690

Designating May 10, 2019, as the 150th Anniversary of the Completion of the First Transcontinental Railroad in Virginia.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 4, 2019

Agreed to by the Senate, February 20, 2019

WHEREAS, with the advent of the railroad in the 1820s, many Americans envisioned binding together the nation through the construction of a railroad that spanned the country, from Atlantic to Pacific; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth of Virginia recognizes the importance of honoring efforts that provide common benefits and promote opportunity for all its residents; and

WHEREAS, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Pacific Railroad Act in 1862 to provide federal support for the building of the First Transcontinental Railroad; and

WHEREAS, the Central Pacific Railroad Company laid the first rails of the new railway in 1863 in Sacramento, California, and continued east across the Sierra Nevada, while a second company, the Union Pacific Railroad Company, built westward from the Missouri River, near the Iowa-Nebraska border, where the line met existing Atlantic railways via ferry, beginning in 1865; and

WHEREAS, the First Transcontinental Railroad required the building of over 50 bridges and trestles and 15 tunnels through the most challenging terrain; and

WHEREAS, building the first major national transportation infrastructure necessitated the employment of thousands of workers, many of whom were Chinese and Irish immigrants, Mormons, Native Americans, Free Blacks, and others who joined to work together to construct the railroad; and

WHEREAS, United States industrialists recruited thousands of Chinese workers to assist in the construction of the railroad; these laborers, who made up to 80 percent of the western workforce, were paid substandard wages and faced grueling hours and extremely harsh conditions in order to lay hundreds of miles of track; and

WHEREAS, the First Transcontinental Railroad was completed on May 10, 1869, by the joining of the two tracks with a symbolic golden spike at Promontory, Utah; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of Labor awarded the Chinese railroad workers a place on the Department's Hall of Honor in 2014, on the 145th anniversary of the railroad's completion; and

WHEREAS, the First Transcontinental Railroad reduced the time required to journey across the United States from six months to one week and the cost of such a trip from \$1,000 to \$150; and

WHEREAS, the impact of the First Transcontinental Railroad in the 19th century has been likened to the impact of the Internet in the 21st century in transforming communications, commerce, and industry; facilitating the movement of peoples across the country; and greatly increasing the global presence of the United States; and

WHEREAS, schools and leaders across the Commonwealth are encouraged to observe May 10, 2019, as the 150th Anniversary of the Completion of the First Transcontinental Railroad and celebrate the tireless efforts of all of those who overcame brutal obstacles, both natural and technological, to achieve the dream of uniting the country from coast to coast; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly designate May 10, 2019, as the 150th Anniversary of the Completion of the Transcontinental Railroad in Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit a copy of this resolution to the Virginia Board of Education so that the members of the Board 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 House of Delegates post the designation of this day on the General Assembly's website.

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