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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 528

Offered January 13, 2021

Prefiled January 8, 2021

Designating November 12, in 2021 and in each succeeding year, as Uyghur American Friendship Day in Virginia.

Patrons—Delaney; Senators: Boysko and Favola

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, on November 12 of each year, members of the Uyghur diaspora in communities around the globe commemorate the history of the former East Turkistan Republics (1933 and 1944), recognize the resilience of their people, and celebrate their unique language, history, culture, and identity; and

WHEREAS, the Uyghur people are indigenous to East Turkistan, a region encompassing 642,000 square miles in the present-day Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, People's Republic of China; and

WHEREAS, the Uyghur homeland, East Turkistan, is situated in what was the center of the ancient Silk Road, a network of trade routes that connected the eastern and western worlds circa 114 BCE to 1450 CE and served as a significant crossroads for religious and cultural exchange; and

WHEREAS, the Uyghurs in East Turkistan have endured decades of oppression, discrimination, and persecution based on their ethnicity, faith, culture, and identity, including restrictions on their God-given freedoms of speech, religion, movement, and expression; and

WHEREAS, the Uyghur people have persevered in the face of unimaginable oppression and persecution, and many have found refuge in the United States, where they have been afforded the freedoms and equal protections under the law familiar to all Americans; and

WHEREAS, the Uyghur American population is estimated to be approximately 8,000-10,000 individuals, with the largest community living in and around Fairfax County; and

WHEREAS, Uyghur Americans have worked diligently to preserve their unique language, history, and rich cultural heritage from erasure; and

WHEREAS, Uyghur Americans have devoted their lives to the wellbeing, security, and prosperity of the United States by making significant contributions in the areas of scholarship, science, law, art, social justice, technology, military service, and government; and

WHEREAS, Uyghur Americans have served their communities, the Commonwealth, and the nation as valorous members of the United States Armed Forces and Virginia National Guard, as well as dedicated educators, civil servants, doctors, religious leaders, entrepreneurs, and more; and

WHEREAS, Uyghur Americans have demonstrated tolerance, friendship, and love in their interactions with neighbors and colleagues and have strengthened the vibrant, diverse communities where they have made their homes; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly designate November 12, in 2021 and in each succeeding year, as Uyghur American Friendship Day in Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit a copy of this resolution to the Uyghur American Association so that the members of the organization 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.

INTRODUCED

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