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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 291

Offered January 13, 2021

Prefiled January 12, 2021

Supporting the establishment of a commemorative commission to honor Booker T. Washington with a statue in the State Capitol.

Patron—Suetterlein

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, educator, orator, and activist Booker T. Washington's life and legacy is deeply tied to his roots in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, born into slavery in Franklin County, Booker T. Washington spent his childhood in Virginia until, after emancipation, he moved with his family to West Virginia, where, at age nine, he began working in salt furnaces and coal mines; during this time, he learned to read and write; and

WHEREAS, determined to continue his education, Booker T. Washington returned to Virginia and enrolled in Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, now Hampton University; he excelled as a student and after graduating returned to teach at Hampton Institute; and

WHEREAS, his time at Hampton Institute guided Booker T. Washington in founding Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Alabama in 1881; at the time of its establishment, Tuskegee Institute's first class held only 30 students, but in less than a decade the school expanded its enrollment to more than 1,000 students; and

WHEREAS, Booker T. Washington worked tirelessly to bridge racial divides, to make education available to all, and to advance civil rights; and

WHEREAS, in closing his autobiography, *Up from Slavery*, Booker T. Washington describes returning to Virginia at the invitation of African American citizens of Richmond to speak to an integrated audience that included the members of the Senate and the House of Delegates, who voted to attend as a body, a testament to his life's work toward racial reconciliation; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of his legacy and contributions to the Commonwealth, it is fitting that Booker T. Washington be honored with a statue in the State Capitol; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly support the establishment of a commemorative commission to honor Booker T. Washington with a statue in the State Capitol; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Governor be requested to establish a commemorative commission (the Commission) that shall consist of the Governor of Virginia, who shall serve as chairman thereof, the Lieutenant Governor of Virginia, the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Rules, the Speaker of the House of Delegates, the Clerk of the Senate, the Clerk of the House of Delegates, the Curator of the Capitol Square Preservation Council, and three other members to be appointed by the Governor.

The Commission shall study and recommend to the General Assembly an appropriate statue in the State Capitol to commemorate the life, achievements, and legacy of Booker T. Washington. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Commission, upon request.

Until completion of the Commission's work or the erection of the statue, whichever occurs later, the Commission shall report annually by December 1 the status of its work, including any findings and recommendations, to the General Assembly, beginning on December 1, 2021. The report shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

INTRODUCED

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