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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 131

Offered February 6, 1996

Designating the Pocahontas Exhibition Mine and Museum as Virginia's State Coal Mining Heritage Zone.

Patrons—Reasor; Delegates: Stump and Tate

Consent to introduce

Referred to the Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the mining of coal has been a vital industry in Virginia for more than 125 years, supporting the development of railroads and seaports, providing employment to thousands of men and women, and supplying fuel to manufacturers, ships, and homes throughout the eastern United States and the world; and

WHEREAS, the opening of the Virginia coal fields took place in Powell's Bottom, in Tazewell County, when in 1870 blacksmith Jordan Nelson opened a small seam from which to obtain fuel for his shop and to sell at a penny a bushel to those who could cart it home; and

WHEREAS, by the time that tiny mine grew and was retired in 1955, it had produced over 44 million tons of coal, which was shipped in an estimated 880,000 hopper cars via the Norfolk and Western Railway; and

WHEREAS, in 1881 Powell's Bottom was developed by the mining company into a bustling community, which, on June 30, 1882, became the Town of Pocahontas, named for the famed daughter of Powhatan, the king of the Powhatan Confederation of eastern Virginia; and

WHEREAS, when the first rail line was laid to Pocahontas the following year, 40,000 tons of coal was ready for shipment, all from the seam opened by Jordan Nelson a dozen years before; and

WHEREAS, by the turn of the century, the Town of Pocahontas boasted a population of more than 5,000, as coal from the Pocahontas seam had become widely known in the East for its quality and smokelessness; and

WHEREAS, the original Pocahontas Mine and its adjacent 1888 generating plant were deeded by gift to the Town of Pocahontas in 1994, and the location was then awarded National Historic Landmark status by the United States Department of the Interior; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Pocahontas has successfully operated an interpretive walk-through Exhibition Mine for six years and in 1995 reopened, entirely with donated funds, the stone-walled generation plant as a mining museum and educational center; and

WHEREAS, the Exhibition Mine and Museum is a growing tourist attraction, with attendance up 54 percent in 1995, and will soon provide a modern classroom for school groups, an expansive exhibit of mining artifacts and memorabilia, and interactive interpretations; and

WHEREAS, the Pocahontas Exhibition Mine and Museum constitutes a compete interpretation of the coal mining heritage of Virginia, utilizing the original historical facilities nationally recognized by landmark status, and are set aside by the Town of Pocahontas for public purposes; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby designate the Pocahontas Exhibition Mine and Museum as Virginia's State Coal Mining Heritage Zone; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Town of Pocahontas for display at the Pocahontas Exhibition Mine and Museum.

INTRODUCED

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