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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 304

Offered February 10, 2006

Commending the 400th anniversary celebration of the 1606 First Virginia Charter.

Patrons—Cox, BaCote, Byron, Callahan, Cole, Cosgrove, Crockett-Stark, Dance, Fralin, Hamilton, Hargrove, Howell, W.J., Iaquinto, Ingram, Joannou, Johnson, Jones, S.C., Landes, Lohr, Marsden, Marshall, D.W., May, McQuigg, Morgan, Nixon, Nutter, O'Bannon, Oder, Parrish, Peace, Plum, Poisson, Purkey, Putney, Rapp, Saxman, Scott, E.T., Scott, J.M., Sherwood, Waddell, Ward, Ware, R.L and Wright; Senators: Bell, Howell, McDougle, Norment, and Puckett

WHEREAS, four hundred years ago, England's King James I issued the 1606 First Virginia Charter on April 10, 1606, creating the Virginia Company and authorizing eight Englishmen to colonize "that part of America commonly called Virginia"; and

WHEREAS, Virginia referred to a vast territory often called the Continent of Virginia and lying between 34 degrees and 45 degrees north latitude, which today would stretch from South Carolina to Canada and include all lands from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast; and

WHEREAS, technically a patent or limited charter, the 1606 Virginia Charter, which may be thought of as the birth certificate of American civilization, established the Virginia Company, a unique missionary, exploration, and business venture during the English Reformation; and

WHEREAS, the 1606 Virginia Charter stated that the Virginia Company, which existed from 1606 to 1624, promoted the spreading of Christianity overseas by "accepting of their desires to the furtherance of so noble a work . . . in propagating of Christian religion"; and

WHEREAS, the 1606 Virginia Charter extended to North America the common law principles of the Magna Carta, guaranteeing that all legal residents in Virginia "shall have and enjoy all liberties, franchises and immunities . . . as if they had been abiding and born within this our realm of England"; and

WHEREAS, the first permanent settlements of English-speaking people were founded in the New World as a direct result of the 1606 Virginia Charter, including the 1607 settlement at Jamestown Island, the 1611 Citie of Henricus, and the 1620 settlement at Plymouth; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Company, adhering to the Reformation precepts of freedom of press, religion, and speech, initiated America's first representative legislative assembly, which convened in the Jamestown Island Church from July 31 to August 4, 1619; and

WHEREAS, the assembly that gathered in 1619 opened with a prayer and an oath, the equivalent of a pledge of allegiance, and enacted the founding of America's first college campus to be along the James River at the 1611 Citie of Henricus; and

WHEREAS, on May 17, 1959, the Virginia State Bar dedicated a plaque at Jamestown honoring that the 1606 Virginia Charter's "principles have inspired the development of our system of freedom under law, which is at once our dearest possession and proudest achievement"; and

WHEREAS, in 1994 - 1995 the General Assembly of Virginia and the Governor enacted legislation requiring that all public school children learn about the three Virginia charters of 1606, 1609, and 1612, so that they may better understand the heritage of the freedoms they enjoy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend the 400th anniversary celebration of the 1606 First Virginia Charter, which may be thought of as the birth certificate of American civilization; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Chancellor Steven C. Smith and Henricus Colledge (1619) ® as an expression of the General Assembly of Virginia's appreciation for the importance of the 1606 First Virginia Charter.

INTRODUCED

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