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HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 48

Offered January 12, 2011

Prefiled January 11, 2011

Memorializing James Henry Cox of Chesterfield.

Patron—Ware, R.L.

WHEREAS, Virginia on twenty-three occasions during the colonial era petitioned the British Crown to cease the transatlantic slave trade; and

WHEREAS, Virginia, in ratifying, on June 26, 1788, the proposed Constitution of the United States, specifically declared that "the powers granted [the Federal government] under the Constitution, being derived from the people of the United States may be resumed by them whensoever the same shall be perverted to their injury or oppression"; and

WHEREAS, when, during the first decades of the nineteenth century, the North and South having developed differences of culture, politics, economy, and religion so fundamental as to constitute separate nations within a single country, Virginia strove to bind the sections through devotion to Union while exploring practical means of achieving emancipation; and

WHEREAS, during the crises ensuing upon the elections of 1860, resulting in the secession of the several States of the Deep South, Virginia clung to Union and sought, through a Peace Committee and also in consultation with representatives of other "Border States" between the United States and the newly formed Confederate States of America, to restore the original Union; and

WHEREAS, Virginia delegates summoned in convention to treat of the crisis occasioned by the secession of the several States of the Deep South voted, on April 4, 1861, by a margin of 90 - 45, to reject a motion for secession from the Union on the terms adumbrated by the slaveholding States of the Deep South; and

WHEREAS, James Henry Cox, representing Chesterfield County, shared the majority's belief that Union was sacred, that secession was misguided, but that revolution, in keeping with the founding principles of the Old Republic, would be justified in the face of Federal coercion; and

WHEREAS, believing both that the Southern States possessed the sovereignty to decide peaceably to withdraw from Union and also that the Federal government would not attempt to coerce the seceded States, Virginia relied on assurances from the national government that no actions would be taken to provoke armed conflict; and

WHEREAS, even after the Federal government decided to provision forts in the seceded States of South Carolina and Florida, and even after South Carolinians had, on April 12, 1861, responded to this Federal provocation by firing on Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor, the Virginians in convention, including Mr. Cox of Chesterfield, refused to secede but held out a last hope for restoration of Union; and

WHEREAS, only after the Lincoln Administration determined to "suppress" the considered judgments of the Southern States, by calling on Virginia to provide 8,000 of the 75,000 soldiers to be used to coerce the Southern States, did devotion to the Union in Virginia collapse, resulting in passage by the Virginia Convention, on April 17, 1861, of an Ordinance of Secession, by a vote of 88 - 55, Mr. Cox concurring, a decision ratified by the people of Chesterfield, in a poll on May 23, 1861, by a vote of 1,421 to 0, and by the people of the Commonwealth by a vote of 132,201 aye, 37,451 nay; and

WHEREAS, James Henry Cox of Chesterfield ably and admirably represented his people's interests in clinging to Union, in resisting secession, and, in refusing to submit to Federal coercion, in upholding as a sacred trust, in a tragic time and despite terrible destruction to come, the principles of the original Republic of the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That the Members of the body recall with regret the complex of circumstances that, one hundred fifty years ago, sundered the original Union and plunged North and South into war; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to The Chesterfield County Historical Society as representatives of the people of Chesterfield County, in solemn remembrance of the services to Virginia of James Henry Cox.

INTRODUCED

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