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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 167

Offered January 16, 2014

Designating Historic Smithfield Plantation in Blacksburg as "the Birthplace of Virginia Governors."

Patrons—Yost and Howell, W.J.

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, Historic Smithfield Plantation, built in 1773 in the scenic Blue Ridge Mountains of present-day Blacksburg, in Montgomery County, was the home of Revolutionary War patriot Colonel William Preston and his wife, Susanna Smith Preston, of Hanover County, and generations of Prestons; and

WHEREAS, Historic Smithfield Plantation, named for Susanna Smith Preston, was constructed in a land of log cabins and physical hardship that later provided a haven of aristocratic elegance and became the social and political center of Montgomery County; and

WHEREAS, Colonel William Preston served in the House of Burgesses in 1765 and represented Augusta County until the county was divided around 1770, according to Patricia Givens Johnson in *William Preston and the Allegheny Patriots*; and

WHEREAS, Colonel William Preston was instrumental in the westward expansion of Virginia and the nation as settlers moved from the Chesapeake Bay area to the Piedmont, across the Blue Ridge Mountains into the Shenandoah Valley; and

WHEREAS, hundreds of settlers moving across the Blue Ridge and Appalachian Mountains into Kentucky, West Virginia, and Tennessee found accommodations from Colonel William Preston, who maximized the strategic location of Historic Smithfield Plantation to build a prosperous real estate business and influential political dynasty that lasted for nearly 90 years; and

WHEREAS, Colonel William and Susanna Smith Preston left a fruitful and rich legacy of leadership, and their descendants have served as Governors of Virginia, members of the Virginia General Assembly and Congress, educators, military leaders, First Ladies of Virginia, presidential Cabinet members, and founders and presidents of educational institutions; and

WHEREAS, most notably, their son, James Patton Preston, served as a member of the Virginia House of Delegates, fought in the War of 1812, helped charter the University of Virginia, and was elected the twentieth Governor of Virginia, serving from 1816 to 1819; and

WHEREAS, other descendants of Colonel William and Susanna Smith Preston include a grandson, William Ballard Preston, who was a United States Congressman, Secretary of the Navy in the administration of President Zachary Taylor, the patron of the Virginia Ordinance of Secession, a senator from the Confederate States of America, and cofounder of Preston and Olin Institute, a small Methodist college, which evolved into Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University; and

WHEREAS, in the *Historic Smithfield Quarterly Newsletter*, Winter 2012 issue, it is recorded that the tenth child of Colonel William and Susanna Smith Preston, "Letitia Preston, married John Floyd, who became Virginia's 25th Governor; granddaughter, Susanna Smith Preston, married James McDowell, who was the 29th Governor of Virginia; granddaughter, Sarah Buchanan Preston, married John Buchanan Floyd, who was born at Historic Smithfield Plantation and became the 31st Governor of Virginia; and that gubernatorial connections from the family extended beyond Virginia to the First Ladies of Maryland and South Carolina and to the Governor of Missouri"; and

WHEREAS, in 1959, Janie Preston Boulware Lamb, a fifth-generation descendant of Colonel William and Susanna Smith Preston, donated the Historic Smithfield Plantation to the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, stipulating that the newly formed Montgomery Branch of Preservation Virginia restore, maintain, and open the house to the public, and Historic Smithfield Plantation was opened to the public in 1964; and

WHEREAS, in 2012, Preservation Virginia announced its transfer of ownership of Historic Smithfield Plantation to the Smithfield-Preston Foundation to ensure the long-term preservation goals of Historic Smithfield Plantation and expand the Foundation's mission of interpreting Virginia's frontier history during the late eighteenth century; and

WHEREAS, costumed interpreters describe the lives of three generations of Prestons and other families who have lived and worked at the Plantation and welcome and guide visitors through the Plantation's home, slave cabin, and eighteenth-century kitchen garden, and grounds; and

WHEREAS, Historic Smithfield Plantation, a place with a rich history of late-eighteenth-century heritage and a legacy of gubernatorial leadership in Virginia, increases public understanding and appreciation of the contributions of many Virginian families to the formation of the Commonwealth and

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59 the nation; now, therefore, be it

60 RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly designate
61 Historic Smithfield Plantation in Blacksburg as "the Birthplace of Virginia Governors"; and, be it

62 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit a copy of this resolution
63 to William G. Foster, Jr., Chairman of the Smithfield-Preston Foundation; Douglas W. Anderson,
64 Museum Administrator of Historic Smithfield Plantation; and Elizabeth Kostelny, Executive Director of
65 Preservation Virginia, so that members of the Smithfield-Preston Foundation Board, Preservation
66 Virginia Board of Trustees, and staff of Historic Smithfield Plantation may be apprised of the sense of
67 the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter; and, be it

68 RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates post the designation of the
69 Historic Smithfield Plantation in Blacksburg as "the Birthplace of Virginia Governors" on the General
70 Assembly's website.