

2017 SESSION

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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 870

Offered February 3, 2017

*Commending Juanita Velasco.*

Patron—Bell, John J.

WHEREAS, Juanita Velasco of Aldie, an interpreter and an expert on traditional Mayan arts and cooking, was appointed as an international ambassador for Mayan culture and tourism by the government of Guatemala in 2016; and

WHEREAS, born in Nebaj, Guatemala, Juanita "Sheba" Velasco learned Mayan back strap weaving techniques and recipes from her grandmother; her native tongue is Ixil, one of 21 different Mayan languages in Guatemala, variants of which are spoken by between 70,000 and 80,000 people; and

WHEREAS, in 1981, Sheba Velasco immigrated to the United States and became a United States citizen; she enjoyed a distinguished career as an Ixil to English interpreter, serving in courtroom proceedings, caseworker interviews, medical patient consultations, and at the United Nations; and

WHEREAS, Sheba Velasco has also shared her Mayan heritage at museums, culture centers, and schools throughout North America, Central America, and Europe; she worked for 13 years at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., and New York City; and

WHEREAS, as an ambassador for Mayan culture, Sheba Velasco continues to travel throughout the United States and the world, giving presentations on a variety of topics related to the Mayans and Guatemala; and

WHEREAS, using hands-on activities tailored to different age groups and audiences, Sheba Velasco demonstrates traditional Mayan weaving, dancing, storytelling, farming, and cooking; she also travels to Guatemala to serve as guide for the country's cities, rural villages, historical sites, and natural wonders; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Juanita Velasco on her appointment as an international ambassador for Mayan culture and tourism; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Juanita Velasco as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for her work to preserve and share the ancient culture of the Maya.

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