

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 965

Commending Pittsylvania County.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 20, 2017
 Agreed to by the Senate, February 22, 2017

WHEREAS, Pittsylvania County in Southside Virginia, a rural county at the edge of the Appalachian Mountains, which is home to the Towns of Chatham, Gretna, and Hurt and is adjacent to the independent City of Danville, celebrates 250 years of history and heritage in 2017; and

WHEREAS, by the discovery of remains of certain campsites and villages, it was revealed that the Pittsylvania County area was previously inhabited by the Saponi, Tutelo, Occaneechi, and Catawba Indian tribes; early European explorers, including English, German, Swiss, and Scots-Irish pioneers, settled the land in the 18th century, following the 1728 expedition led by Colonel William Byrd II, a surveyor and explorer of the Virginia-North Carolina border, who described the area as being as lush and fertile as the biblical Garden of Eden and named the Dan River after one of the sources of the Jordan River; and

WHEREAS, officially formed from part of Halifax County in 1767, Pittsylvania County originally included parts of what are now the Counties of Henry and Patrick and parts of Franklin County, and it remains the largest county in the Commonwealth, with nearly 1,000 square miles of territory, making it larger than some small countries, and 1,600 miles of rivers and streams, enough to stretch from the Atlantic Ocean to Colorado; and

WHEREAS, Pittsylvania County was named for William Pitt, 1st Earl of Chatham, a Prime Minister of Great Britain who opposed harsh colonial policies such as the Stamp Tax; residents of Pittsylvania County played pivotal roles in the American Revolution, with county soldiers participating in the Crossing of the Dan, the Battle of Guilford Courthouse and the Battle of Yorktown, and the first gunpowder factory in Virginia was located near Hurt; and

WHEREAS, residents of Pittsylvania County answered the call to defend the fledgling United States during the War of 1812 and made many contributions to the nation in its early years; by 1840, Pittsylvania County farmers produced more tobacco than any other county in Virginia, and tobacco and cattle farming remain important aspects of the Pittsylvania County economy to this day; and

WHEREAS, the Pittsylvania County flag, one of the earliest county flags in the United States, was designed in the early 1820s as a banner for the 2nd Battalion, 42nd Regiment of the local militia and features 23 stars, one for each state in the United States at the time; the meticulously restored original flag is on display at the Pittsylvania County Courthouse in Chatham; and

WHEREAS, during the Civil War, soldiers from Pittsylvania County participated in several battles and were some of the first troops to reach the Union lines during Pickett's Charge at the Battle of Gettysburg; after the fall of Richmond, Confederate President Jefferson Davis traveled on the Richmond and Danville Railroad, the county's first railroad line, and thereafter Danville became known as the last capital of the Confederacy; and

WHEREAS, throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, Pittsylvania County continued to prosper in a changing world, with textile mills becoming a leading industry and local mines becoming a source of iron and important minerals; the county maintains a long history of educational excellence in public and private schools, with Chatham Hall and Hargrave Military Academy still preparing students to be responsible citizens and leaders in their communities; and

WHEREAS, Pittsylvania County is home to many local congregations which seek to provide joyful fellowship and opportunities for worship; St. John's Episcopal Church, founded in the 1700s, is the oldest active congregation in the county, and the Pittsylvania Baptist Association, founded in 1788, the same year Virginia approved the United States Constitution, continues to this day with many member churches throughout the county; and

WHEREAS, soldiers from Pittsylvania County have served the nation in all of America's wars, earning many decorations for their valor, and other members of the Pittsylvania County community have gone on to achieve great success and international renown as public servants, volunteers, attorneys, doctors, educators, historians, entrepreneurs, artists, authors, poets, television personalities, musicians, and athletes; and

WHEREAS, many Colonial-era homes and buildings have been preserved in Pittsylvania County, and multiple significant sites are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, including the earliest and most recent courthouses; and

WHEREAS, Pittsylvania County will commemorate its 250th anniversary with a yearlong celebration and special events throughout 2017; now, therefore, be it

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RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Pittsylvania County on the occasion of its 250th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Pittsylvania County Board of Supervisors as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the county's rich history and contributions to the Commonwealth.