

2019 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 867

Commending United Steelworkers Local 8888.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 18, 2019
Agreed to by the Senate, February 23, 2019

WHEREAS, for more than 40 years, United Steelworkers Local 8888 has supported and advocated for the hardworking men and women of Newport News Shipbuilding, the largest single private sector employer in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, prior to the formation of Local 8888, the employees of Newport News Shipbuilding were represented by the Peninsula Shipbuilders Association, which did not hold meetings, elect shop stewards, or maintain a safety clause in its contract; at the time, wages and pensions for shipbuilders in Newport News were lower than those at other shipyards in the United States; and

WHEREAS, in an effort to improve working conditions for their fellow shipbuilders, a group that became known as the "front four," Oscar Pretlow, Edward Coppedge, Ellis Cofield, and W.T. Hayes, contacted United Steelworkers seeking stronger union representation; and

WHEREAS, in the face of opposition from the Peninsula Shipbuilders Association, thousands of shipbuilders in Newport News voted by secret ballot to affiliate with United Steelworkers as Local 8888 in January 1978, a decision that the shipyard owner refused to recognize; and

WHEREAS, one year later, with the support of workers from throughout the Commonwealth and the United States, the shipbuilders of Local 8888 went on strike for 82 days, until the National Labor Relations Board upheld the validity of the election, obligating the company to bargain with United Steelworkers; and

WHEREAS, in the six years after Local 8888 signed its first agreement with the shipyard, wages and benefits increased by more than \$500 million, and the organization has since produced many other contracts resulting in higher wages, improved health benefits, better pensions, and increased workplace safety; and

WHEREAS, in its 40-year history, Local 8888 has benefited from the strong leadership of presidents Lucky Howard, Wayne Crosby, Edward Coppedge, Russ Axsom, Ray Coppedge, Thomas Crudup, Alton Glass, Arnold Outlaw, and Charles Spivey; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend United Steelworkers Local 8888 on the occasion of its 40th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Charles Spivey, president of United Steelworkers Local 8888, as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the organization's work to promote the economic vitality of the Commonwealth by supporting the employees of Newport News Shipbuilding.

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