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HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 318

Offered February 13, 2023

Commending the Virginia Conservation Police.

Patrons—Kory and Carr

WHEREAS, the Virginia Conservation Police, a unit of the Department of Wildlife Resources that has greatly served the Commonwealth by promoting the management of inland fisheries, wildlife, and recreational boating, celebrates its 120th anniversary in 2023; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Conservation Police was created on May 14, 1903, when the General Assembly enacted legislation during a special session to establish a statewide system of law-enforcement officers devoted specifically to wildlife crime; and

WHEREAS, in the early days of the Virginia Conservation Police, officers, known then as game wardens, were political appointees serving at the pleasure of local officials in their areas of assignment; with minimal training, they learned what they could on the job and from local sheriffs and police departments; and

WHEREAS, in 1916, the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries was created by the General Assembly with a mandate to manage the fisheries and wildlife resources of the Commonwealth, and the Virginia Conservation Police fell under its purview; in 2007, game wardens became conservation police officers and 13 years later the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries became the Department of Wildlife Resources; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Conservation Police patrols a vast and expansive jurisdiction to enforce the Commonwealth's laws regulating hunting, fishing, boating, and other wildlife matters and to ensure that both citizens and visitors in the Commonwealth safely and responsibly enjoy the area's exceptional natural resources; and

WHEREAS, conservation police officers of the Virginia Conservation Police are fully certified through the Department of Criminal Justice Services, with authority to enforce all of the laws of the Commonwealth, and they also serve as deputy U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service special agents, enabling them to conduct investigations and cross state lines when violations of federal wildlife laws have occurred; and

WHEREAS, members of the Virginia Conservation Police possess a unique array of skills that enable them to greatly assist other state and local agencies in a number of circumstances, from tracking suspects through difficult terrain to responding in the wake of a natural disaster; and

WHEREAS, education and public outreach is a major component of the work of the Virginia Conservation Police, as the department places a strong emphasis on serving the community while working to fulfill its mission; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That the Virginia Conservation Police hereby be commended for its dedication and professionalism in protecting the Commonwealth's wildlife and natural resources on the occasion of its 120th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Virginia Conservation Police as an expression of the House of Delegates' admiration for the department's history of contributions to the Commonwealth.

INTRODUCED

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