

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 395

Commemorating the life of Thomas Jefferson on the occasion of the 265th anniversary of his birth.

Agreed to by the Senate, January 29, 2009
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 6, 2009

WHEREAS, April 13, 2008, marked the 265th anniversary of the birth of Thomas Jefferson, one of the great founders of the nation, a revered Virginia statesman, and the third president of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Jefferson was born in Shadwell, Virginia, on April 13, 1743, and died at his beloved Monticello near Charlottesville on July 4, 1826, on the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Jefferson attended The College of William and Mary in Williamsburg; studied law under another prominent Virginian, George Wythe; and was licensed to practice law at the bar of the General Court in 1767; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Jefferson married 23-year-old widow, Martha Wayles Skelton, on January 1, 1772, and the couple had six children, two of whom survived into adulthood; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Jefferson was elected to the Virginia House of Burgesses in 1769, representing Albemarle County; served until the legislature was temporarily dissolved in 1774; and returned as an influential member of the new Virginia House of Delegates in 1776; and

WHEREAS, in opposition to the Coercive Acts by the British Parliament in 1774, Thomas Jefferson authored *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*, originally intended as the instructions for the Virginia delegation to the First Continental Congress and in which he offered the radical notion that the colonists had a natural right to govern themselves; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Jefferson was the principal author of the Declaration of Independence adopted by the Second Continental Congress on July 4, 1776; and

WHEREAS, an advocate for the separation of church and state, Thomas Jefferson was the author in 1779 of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, which remains a part of the Code of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Jefferson was governor of Virginia from 1779 to 1781, oversaw the state capital's move in 1780 from Williamsburg to Richmond, and created the first chair of law at his alma mater, The College of William and Mary; and

WHEREAS, a passionate advocate for the rights of all people, Thomas Jefferson described slavery as a "great political and moral evil" in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, and he tried early in his political career, both in the language of the Constitution of Virginia and the Ordinance of 1784 for the Northwest Territory, to ban slavery; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Jefferson was minister to France from 1784 to 1789, and he returned to America to serve from 1790 to 1792 as the first secretary of state during the presidency of George Washington; and

WHEREAS, during John Adams' presidency, Thomas Jefferson was elected vice president of the United States, serving from 1797 to 1800; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Jefferson was elected third president of the United States and served two terms from 1801 to 1809; and

WHEREAS, two major achievements of Thomas Jefferson's presidency were the purchase of the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803 and the sponsorship of the Lewis and Clark Expedition from 1804 to 1806, which resulted in great scientific exploration and a vision of America extending from sea to shining sea; and

WHEREAS, after leaving the presidency, Thomas Jefferson conceived of a plan for an institution of higher learning, designed the buildings, and devised the curriculum for what has become the prestigious University of Virginia in Charlottesville; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Jefferson was one of the most enlightened and significant figures in American history, and he left a substantial legacy through his outstanding efforts in a multitude of fields, including law, statecraft, architecture, commerce, education, and the sciences that has greatly benefited all humankind; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commemorate, on the occasion of the 265th anniversary of his birth, the life of Thomas Jefferson, a remarkable visionary who championed the principles of freedom and democracy that have made the United States the greatest nation in the world; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the organization's many efforts to promote patriotism and educate citizens about the achievements of one of our nation's greatest founding fathers.