**South Carolina General Assembly**

125th Session, 2023-2024

**H. 4173**

**STATUS INFORMATION**

Concurrent Resolution

Sponsors: Reps. B.L. Cox, J.L. Johnson, Murphy, Sessions, Cobb-Hunter, Kirby, Tedder, Brewer, Garvin, Henegan, M.M. Smith, Jefferson, Rivers, McDaniel, Davis, Haddon, King, Gilliard, Stavrinakis, Bauer, West, Wetmore, T. Moore, Thigpen, Chapman, Schuessler, Pope, Guffey, Dillard, W. Jones, Pendarvis, G.M. Smith, Weeks, Wheeler, Williams and S. Jones

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Introduced in the House on March 28, 2023

Currently residing in the House

Summary: State House Grounds, erecting a monument to Robert Smalls

**HISTORY OF LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS**

 Date Body Action Description with journal page number

 3/28/2023 House Introduced (House Journal‑page 20)

 3/28/2023 House Referred to Committee on **Invitations and Memorial Resolutions** (House Journal‑page 20)

 4/5/2023 House Member(s) request name added as sponsor: S. Jones

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**VERSIONS OF THIS BILL**

[03/28/2023](https://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess125_2023-2024/prever/4173_20230328.docx)

A concurrent RESOLUTION

TO allow FOR THE ERECTING of A MONUMENT TO ROBERT SMALLS on the state house grounds.

Whereas, the members of the General Assembly propose a monument of enduring historical significance to Robert Smalls, an escaped slave who became a Civil War hero and a legislator in the South Carolina General Assembly and served five terms in the United States House of Representatives; and

Whereas, Robert Smalls was born a slave on April 5, 1839, in Beaufort, South Carolina. He was the son of Lydia Polite but owned by John McKee; and

Whereas, during the Civil War, Mr. Smalls, illiterate and twenty-three years old, escaped by commandeering the Confederate ship, the Planter, on which he worked, delivering its black passengers from slavery to freedom through a gauntlet of gunboats and forts. Thereafter, he served the Union Army as a civilian boat pilot with distinction in numerous engagements, acted as a spokesperson for African Americans, and was made the first Black captain of an Army vessel for his valor; and

Whereas, Mr. Smalls served in the South Carolina House of Representatives, the South Carolina Senate, and the United States House of Representatives, enduring violent elections to achieve internal improvements for coastal South Carolina and to fight for his Black constituents in the face of growing disenfranchisement; and

Whereas, Mr. Smalls spoke openly in defense of his race and his party. Even with the rise of Jim Crow laws, Mr. Smalls stood firm as an unyielding advocate for the political rights of African Americans; and

Whereas, he was one of the first South Carolinians to advocate successfully for compulsory education; and

Whereas, Mr. Smalls played a critical role in bridging relations between the Black and White communities during and after Reconstruction; and

Whereas, he was the founder of the Enterprise Railroad Company of Charleston; and

Whereas, Mr. Smalls also served as brigadier general of the South Carolina Militia; opened a store for freedmen and a school for black children; published a newspaper, the *Beaufort Southern Standard*; and served as the U.S. Customs collector at the port of Beaufort; and

Whereas, he promoted the establishment of the US Naval Station at Port Royal and the purchase of Parris Island; and

Whereas, in 2007, the US Army named a ship after an African American for the first time, the support vessel Maj. Gen. Robert Smalls; and

Whereas, Mr. Smalls married Hannah Jones and, upon her death, remarried Annie Wigg. He had four children: Elizabeth, Sarah, Robert, Jr., and William Robert; and

Whereas, Mr. Smalls died in Beaufort on February 22, 1915, in the same house behind which he had been born and served as a slave, and later came to purchase; and

Whereas, a monument to honor Robert Smalls would represent the remarkable contributions, achievements, and accomplishments of this forgotten son of South Carolina and would serve as an overdue tribute to the many slaves who sacrificed alongside him. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives, the Senate concurring:

That the members of the General Assembly, by this resolution, and notwithstanding another provision of law, specifically and solely allow for the erecting of a monument to Robert Smalls on the State House grounds.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the State House Committee.

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