**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO RECOGNIZE AND HONOR CIVIL WAR HERO, SOUTH CAROLINA LEGISLATOR, AND UNITED STATES CONGRESSMAN, ROBERT SMALLS, AND TO COMMEMORATE THE SESQUICENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY OF HIS CAPTURE OF THE CONFEDERATE GUN BOAT *THE PLANTER* IN MAY OF 1862.

Whereas, a native of Beaufort, Robert Smalls is commonly recognized as the first African‑American Civil War hero because of his successful and heroic efforts on May 13, 1862, when he captured the Confederate gun boat *The Planter* and surrendered it to Union forces; and

Whereas, Robert Smalls was born a slave on April 5, 1839, in Beaufort to Robert and Lydia Smalls. He gained freedom on May 13, 1862 when Smalls, a crew of eight African-American sailors, five women passengers, and three children escaped by stealing *The Planter*, for which Smalls served as pilot, and navigating the steamer past Fort Sumter to surrender to the Union Navy, later resulting in Smalls’ freedom. The bravery and success of Smalls and his crew was celebrated in an article in *Harper’s Weekly* and recognized by President Abraham Lincoln; and

Whereas, Smalls later became the first African‑American captain of a United States Naval vessel, initially as pilot of the *U.S.S. Wabash* and then of *The Planter*; and

Whereas, in June 1864, he served as part of a delegation of free blacks to attend the National Republican Party Convention, and he attended the state’s Constitutional Convention of 1866 in Columbia as a delegate, advocating mandatory public education for children; and

Whereas, Robert Smalls served as a distinguished and respected member of the South Carolina House of Representatives from 1868 to 1870, and was later elected to the South Carolina Senate where he served additional four years; and

Whereas, one of the organizers of the First South Carolina Volunteers, called the Thirty‑third Regiment of United States Colored Troops, he received a commission as a second lieutenant in Company B; and

Whereas, a champion of progressive causes, Robert Smalls was elected to serve South Carolina for five terms in the United States Congress beginning with the 44th Congress in 1875. After serving in Congress, Smalls returned to Beaufort to serve an appointment by President William McKinley to the post of customs collector, and as Major General in the South Carolina Militia; and

Whereas, although Smalls died on February 23, 1915, his legacy continued through the naming of the “Robert Smalls Middle School” and the “Robert Smalls Parkway” in Beaufort County, the establishment of Naval Training Station in Illinois named “Camp Robert Smalls”, and the naming of the $25 million Army Logistics Support Vessel (LSV-8) as the “Major General Robert Smalls”, making it the first U.S. Army vessel named for a Civil War hero and the first named for an African American; and

Whereas, the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives are pleased to recognize the one-hundred fiftieth anniversary of the capture of the Confederate gun boat, *The Planter*, and to acknowledge the heroic legacy and the significant contributions to the Palmetto State made by Robert Smalls. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, recognize and honor Civil War hero, South Carolina legislator, and United States congressman, Robert Smalls, and commemorate the sesquicentennial anniversary of his capture of the Confederate gun boat *The Planter* in May of 1862.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to Helen Boulware Moore, descendant of Robert Smalls and curator of his collection.

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