**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO CELEBRATE THE SEVENTY‑SEVENTH ANNUAL HAMPTON COUNTY WATERMELON FESTIVAL, TO BE HELD FRIDAY, JUNE 14, 2019, THROUGH SUNDAY, JUNE 23, 2019, TO ENCOURAGE ALL SOUTH CAROLINIANS TO ATTEND AND ENJOY THIS FAMILY‑FRIENDLY EVENT, AND TO WISH ITS ORGANIZERS EVERY SUCCESS.

Whereas, Hampton County is the home of the world’s original watermelon festival, and since its inception in 1939, it has grown to become South Carolina’s oldest continuing festival. From the beginning, it has been a celebration of, for, and by, the people of this friendly Lowcountry county, timed to the melon harvest every summer. The festival tradition has been interrupted only twice, first during World War II (1943‑1945) and again during the Korean War (1951); and

Whereas, since the festival’s earliest celebrations, Friday night’s street dance in Hampton featuring beach music has been among the best‑attended attractions. But the crowning event of the Hampton County Watermelon Festival is the Miss Coastal Empire Pageant. Many a Palmetto State beauty has added to the scenery, including the late U.S. Senator Strom Thurmond’s wife, who came as Miss South Carolina (Nancy Moore of Aiken) in 1966 to the twenty‑fourth edition of the festival; and

Whereas, in 1993, the festival expanded to eight days, running Sunday to Sunday. Opening ceremonies were coupled with a new event called Festival Family Fun Day, sponsored by the Hampton County Chamber of Commerce and held at Lake Warren State Park. This expansion made the festival the third longest in the State in terms of days. However, in terms of distance covered, the festival boasts the longest parade in the State of South Carolina at 3.2 miles, beginning in Varnville and ending in Hampton, and it has never been rained out; and

Whereas, in addition to taking in the main parade and street dance, this year’s visitors will enjoy athletic events, the Festival Youth Parade, snappy bands, arts and crafts, food, mud runs, Children’s Day, and plenty of watermelon, among other attractions; and

Whereas, the House of Representatives commends the people of Hampton County for bringing this delightful festival to the Palmetto State and encourages all South Carolinians to patronize and enjoy its offerings. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, celebrate the seventy‑seventh annual Hampton County Watermelon Festival, to be held Friday, June 14, 2019, through Sunday, June 23, 2019, encourage all South Carolinians to attend and enjoy this family‑friendly event, and wish its organizers every success.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to the planners of the Hampton County Watermelon Festival.

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