**A** **CONCURRENT RESOLUTION**

TO REMEMBER THE FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND AMERICANS WHO HAVE LOST THEIR LIVES TO COVID‑19 AND THEIR LOVED ONES WHO ARE GRIEVING, TO COMMEND THE EFFORTS OF FIRST RESPONDERS, HEALTHCARE WORKERS, AND OTHER SOUTH CAROLINIANS DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC, AND TO URGE THE GOVERNOR TO ORDER THE FLAGS ATOP THE STATE CAPITOL BUILDING BE FLOWN AT HALF‑STAFF UNTIL SUNSET ON FEBRUARY 26, 2021.

Whereas, on February 22, 2021, in commemoration of the grim milestone of half a million American lives lost to the COVID‑19 pandemic, President Joseph Biden, the First Lady, Vice President Kamala Harris, and the Second Gentleman led the nation in a moment of silence at the White House at sunset, asking fellow Americans to join them in this act of remembrance and unity; and

Whereas, in the accompanying proclamation, President Biden reflected that, “as of this week during the dark winter of the COVID‑19 pandemic, more than 500,000 Americans have now died from the virus. That is more Americans who have died in a single year of this pandemic than in World War I, World War II, and the Vietnam War combined”; and

Whereas, Department of Health and Environmental Control data that tracks confirmed and probable COVID‑related deaths in the State reflect that more than 8,000 South Carolinians have died as a result of COVID and that close to 500,000 residents of the State have tested positive for the virus; and

Whereas, each life lost in South Carolina and across the nation represents millions of children, grandchildren, parents, siblings, friends, coworkers, and neighbors, who are grieving the loss of their loved one, often alone or without the ability to console one another or mourn together; and

Whereas, despite the hurdles facing the State and nation, first responders and healthcare workers across South Carolina are meeting the challenges posed by caring for the sick, assisting in efforts to prevent further spread of the disease, and facilitating a complicated once‑in‑a‑century vaccine distribution effort. They are to be praised for their ongoing heroic efforts; and

Whereas, also to be commended, are the teachers, school administrators, and staff continuing to fulfill their duties to educate the young, as well as the food service industry, postal employees, custodial workers, state and local government employees, retailers, and all the small businesses across the State for adapting to the realities of operating in a pandemic, and positioning South Carolina for a bright future, albeit with many losses suffered; and

Whereas, as part of his proclamation, President Biden ordered that the flags of the United States be flown at half‑staff at the White House and on all public buildings and grounds, at all military posts and naval stations, on all naval vessels of the federal government in the District of Columbia and throughout the United States and its Territories and possessions, and at all United States embassies, legations, consular offices, and other facilities abroad until sunset February 26, 2021; and

Whereas, pursuant to Section 10‑1‑161(F) of the 1976 Code, the Governor may order the flags atop the State Capitol Building to be lowered to half‑staff for the same designated time when a presidential order is issued to lower flags to half‑staff over federal buildings. As such, the Governor is urged to join other states in lowering the flags as a way to remember the many lives lost to COVID‑19 in order to heal, unite, and find purpose as one nation to defeat this pandemic. Now, therefore,

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

That the members of the South Carolina General Assembly, by this resolution, remember the five hundred thousand Americans who have lost their lives to COVID‑19 and their loved ones who are grieving, commend the efforts of first responders, healthcare workers, and other South Carolinians during a global pandemic, and urge the Governor to order the flags atop the State Capitol Building be flown at half‑staff until sunset on February 26, 2021.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to the Honorable Henry Dargan McMaster.

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