**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO RECOGNIZE THE PROCLAMATION OF THE RECONSTRUCTION ERA MONUMENT ENCOMPASSING THE HISTORIC SITES OF BRICK BAPTIST CHURCH, DARRAH HALL, THE PENN CENTER, CAMP SAXTON, AND THE OLD BEAUFORT FIREHOUSE IN BEAUFORT COUNTY.

Whereas, the Reconstruction Era was a period of great change in the history of the United States. During this time, the foundations were being put in place for what would become our modern nation. Citizens of the U.S. were faced with tumultuous transformations that challenged their ways of thinking, but ultimately lead to a better country for all; and

Whereas, the Reconstruction Era began when the first United States soldiers arrived in slaveholding territories. This happened in November 1861 in the Lowcountry of southeastern South Carolina, and Beaufort County in particular. Just seven months after the start of the Civil War, Admiral Samuel F. DuPont led a successful attack on Port Royal Sound and brought a swath of South Carolina’s coast under Union control; and

Whereas, Beaufort became one of the first places in the U.S. where formerly enslaved people could begin integrating themselves into free society; and

Whereas, while the Civil War raged in the background, Beaufort County became the birthplace of the Reconstruction. With federal forces in charge of the Sea Islands, the Department of Treasury, with the support of President Lincoln and the War Department, decided to turn the military occupation into a novel social experiment, known as the Port Royal Experiment, to help former slaves become self‑sufficient. They enlisted antislavery and religious societies from the north to raise resources and recruit volunteers for the effort; and

Whereas, in and around Beaufort County during Reconstruction, the first African Americans enlisted as soldiers, the first African American schools were founded, early efforts to distribute land to former slaves took place, and many of the Reconstruction Era’s most significant African American politicians, including Robert Smalls, came to prominence. African American political influence and land ownership endured there long after setback in other regions. Events and people from Beaufort County illustrate the most important challenges of Reconstruction and some early hopeful efforts to address them. The significant historical events that transpired in Beaufort County make it an ideal place to tell stories of experimentation, potential transformation, hope, and accomplishment. In Beaufort County, including St. Helena Island, the town of Port Royal, and the city of Beaufort, many existing historic objects demonstrate the transformative effect of emancipation and Reconstruction; and

Whereas, the Reconstruction Era Monument was established as a unit of the National Park Service by Presidential Proclamation on January 12, 2017, in recognition of the role Beaufort County played in shaping the historic period of Reconstruction; and

Whereas, Darrah Hall and Brick Baptist Church within Penn School National Historic Landmark District on St. Helena Island, the site of one of the country’s first schools for freed slaves and a church built by slaves in 1855 and subsequently turned over to former slaves in 1862, mark two of the areas included within the Reconstruction Era Monument; and

Whereas, additionally, the Camp Saxton Site, on U.S. Navy property in Port Royal, where some of the first African Americans joined the U.S. Army, and the site where elaborate ceremonies were held on New Year’s Day 1863 to announce and celebrate the enactment of the Emancipation Proclamation, along with the Old Beaufort Firehouse, an historic building located in the midst of historic downtown Beaufort will finalize the sites included within the monument. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, recognize the proclamation of the Reconstruction Era Monument encompassing the historic sites of Brick Baptist Church, Darrah Hall, the Penn Center, Camp Saxton, and the Old Beaufort Firehouse in Beaufort County.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to Beaufort County, the City of Beaufort, and the Town of Port.

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