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S. CON. RES. 65

Celebrating the birth of Abraham Lincoln and recognizing the prominence the Declaration of Independence played in the development of Abraham Lincoln's beliefs.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 6, 2008

Mr. DURBIN submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

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CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Celebrating the birth of Abraham Lincoln and recognizing the prominence the Declaration of Independence played in the development of Abraham Lincoln's beliefs.

Whereas Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States, was born of humble roots on February 12, 1809, in Hardin County, Kentucky;

Whereas Abraham Lincoln rose to political prominence as an attorney with a reputation for fairness, honesty, and a belief that all men are created equal and that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights;

Whereas Abraham Lincoln was elected and served with distinction in 1832 as a captain of an Illinois militia company during the Black Hawk War;

Whereas Abraham Lincoln was elected to the Illinois legislature in 1834 from Sangamon County and was successively reelected until 1840;

Whereas Abraham Lincoln revered the Declaration of Independence, forming the motivating moral and natural law principle for his opposition to the spread of slavery to new States entering the Union and to his belief in slavery's ultimate demise;

Whereas Abraham Lincoln was elected in 1846 to serve in the United States House of Representatives, ably representing central Illinois;

Whereas Abraham Lincoln re-entered political life as a reaction to the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, which he opposed;

Whereas Abraham Lincoln expounded on his views of natural rights during the series of debates with Stephen A. Douglas in 1858, declaring in Charleston, Illinois that natural rights were ''enumerated in the Declaration of Independence, the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness'', and these views brought Lincoln into national prominence;

Whereas Abraham Lincoln, through a legacy of courage, character, and patriotism, was elected to office as the 16th President of the United States on November 6, 1860;

Whereas Abraham Lincoln believed the Declaration of Independence to be the anchor of American republicanism, stating on February 22, 1861, during an address at Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania that, ''I have never had a feeling politically that did not spring from the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Inde-

pendence . . . I have often inquired of myself, what great principle or idea it was that kept this Confederacy so long together. It was not the mere matter of separation of the Colonies from the motherland; but that sentiment in the Declaration of Independence which gave liberty, not alone to the people of this country, but, I hope, to the world, for all future time. It was that which gave promise that in due time the weight would be lofted from the shoulders of men'';

Whereas, upon taking office and being thrust into the midst of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln wrote the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing all slaves in southern States that seceded from the Union on January 1, 1863;

Whereas, on November 19, 1863, Abraham Lincoln dedicated the battlefield at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania with the Gettysburg Address, which would later be known as his greatest speech, that harkened back to the promises of the Declaration of Independence in the first sentence: ''Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth, on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal'';

Whereas Abraham Lincoln was reelected to the presidency on November 8, 1864, by 55 percent of the popular vote;

Whereas Abraham Lincoln gave the ultimate sacrifice for his country, dying 6 weeks into his second term on April 15, 1865;

Whereas the year 2009 will be the bicentennial anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, and the United States will observe 2 years of commemorations beginning February 12, 2008; and

Whereas all Americans could benefit from studying the life of Abraham Lincoln as a model of achieving the American Dream through honesty, integrity, loyalty, and a lifetime of education: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That Congress—

(1) requests that the President issue a proclamation each year recognizing the anniversary of the birth of President Abraham Lincoln and calling upon the people of the United States to observe such anniversary with appropriate ceremonies and activities; and

(2) encourages State and local governments and local educational agencies to devote sufficient time to study and appreciate the reverence and respect Abraham Lincoln had for the significance and importance of the Declaration of Independence in the development of American history, jurisprudence, and the spread of freedom around the world.

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