

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 2018-4655, by Representative Shea

1 WHEREAS, With an unwavering conviction that "Almighty God hath
2 created the mind free," Thomas Jefferson drafted the Virginia Statute
3 for Religious Freedom; and

4 WHEREAS, On January 16, 1786, the Virginia Statute for Religious
5 Freedom, a strong statement for freedom of conscience, was passed by
6 the Virginia General Assembly; and

7 WHEREAS, The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom served as an
8 inspiration and basis for First Amendment protections for religious
9 freedom in the United States Constitution; and

10 WHEREAS, Freedom of conscience has been highly valued in our
11 nation since its earliest beginnings, not only by individuals seeking
12 religious freedom in the American colonies but through colonial
13 charters and laws such as the 1658 "Flushing Remonstrance," that
14 guaranteed citizens the freedom "to have and enjoy the liberty of
15 conscience, according to the manner and custom of Holland, without
16 molestation or disturbance"; and

17 WHEREAS, These values were enshrined in the First Amendment to
18 the United States Constitution, which guarantees that "Congress shall
19 make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting
20 the free exercise thereof..."; and

21 WHEREAS, Our Founding Fathers knew as they designed our nation
22 that religious freedom was vital to help strengthen and unite it; and

1 WHEREAS, In a 1789 letter, George Washington said, "The liberty
2 enjoyed by the people of these States, of worshipping Almighty God
3 agreeably to their consciences, is not only among the choicest of
4 their blessings, but also of their rights."; and

5 WHEREAS, Many of the first immigrants to our nation came to these
6 shores motivated by their desire for religious liberty so that they
7 could worship according to the dictates of their own consciences; and

8 WHEREAS, The right to exercise one's own individual conscience is
9 a critical and essential element in the fabric of American culture
10 and history which serves as a beacon of freedom in the world; and

11 WHEREAS, Each year the President of the United States declares
12 January 16th to be Religious Freedom Day and calls upon Americans to
13 observe this day through events and activities;

14 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That today we proudly look back
15 in history to the passage of the Virginia Statute for Religious
16 Freedom on January 16, 1786, recognizing and affirming Religious
17 Freedom Day to commemorate that great historical accomplishment that
18 provided the heart of our First Amendment to the United States
19 Constitution.

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