

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 369

Commending Children of the Shenandoah.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 13, 2025
 Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 17, 2025

WHEREAS, in prehistoric times, molten rock flowed through the earth's crust, cooled, fractured, and formed the majestic granite peaks and sylvan hollows known today as the Blue Ridge Mountains; and

WHEREAS, some 8,000 to 9,000 years ago, Native Americans seasonally visited the area now known as Shenandoah National Park to hunt and gather food and source stone for tools and weapons, and many families later made the mountains their homes; and

WHEREAS, inspired by Yellowstone National Park and other parks in the American West, a national reserve in the Blue Ridge Mountains was first proposed in 1901, but when the campaign stalled, Virginians took it upon themselves to make the park a reality; using eminent domain, the Commonwealth acquired property from numerous landholders and donated the parcels to the federal government, and Shenandoah National Park was established the day after Christmas in 1935; and

WHEREAS, with the creation of the park, nearly 500 families were displaced and several homes were burned and destroyed; some families were resettled in Madison County, but many family cemeteries and artifacts from their homesteads remain in Shenandoah National Park today; and

WHEREAS, the play "Can't Feel At Home" by local Elkton and Shenandoah physician Dr. John Glock is a remarkable play that tells the real truth about the traumatic expulsion of the mountain dwellers; and

WHEREAS, Shenandoah National Park currently encompasses parts of the counties of Page, Warren, Rockingham, Augusta, Greene, Madison, Rappahannock, and Albemarle; and

WHEREAS, Shenandoah National Park is made up of three districts: North District, Central District, and South District; Rapidan Camp, which lays in the South District, was built in 1929 and served as a rural retreat and the wilderness White House during the presidency of Herbert Hoover; Brown House, the presidential cabin, has been historically refurnished, and the Prime Minister's Cabin offers exhibits on Hoover's life and times; and

WHEREAS, Shenandoah National Park was the first national park to host the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), and the 10,000 CCC members who lived and worked in Shenandoah National Park from 1933 to 1942 built visitor centers, picnic grounds, trails, and much of the infrastructure visitors still rely on to this day; and

WHEREAS, civil rights have also played a role in Shenandoah National Park's history; Lewis Mountain in the park's Central District was the segregated area of the park from 1935 to 1950, and the "Negro Area" sign from Lewis Mountain is now part of an exhibition presenting the history of the park at Byrd Visitor Center; and

WHEREAS, in 1976, the United States Congress declared almost half of the park as protected wilderness; 500 miles of trails, consisting of 101 miles of the Appalachian Trail, lead visitors to waterfalls, panoramic views, protected wilderness, and preserved human history in the Shenandoah Valley; and

WHEREAS, Shenandoah National Park is a national treasure that has served generations of Virginians and visitors from around the country and the world, but its complex history has often been overlooked; and

WHEREAS, Children of the Shenandoah, an organization of the descendants of families removed from the Blue Ridge Mountains to make way for Shenandoah National Park, strives to preserve family traditions and local history with respect and dignity; and

WHEREAS, Children of the Shenandoah has worked with the Blue Ridge Heritage Project, James Madison University, and Chaz Haywood, Clerk of Courts for Rockingham County, to preserve the history of these displaced families in a variety of ways; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Children of the Shenandoah for preserving the memory of the nearly 500 families and their descendants who suffered the loss of land and homes in the creation of Shenandoah National Park; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare copies of this resolution for presentation to Children of the Shenandoah and the superintendent of Shenandoah National Park as an expression of the General Assembly's appreciation for the significance of the park's history and admiration for its current standing as one of the finest national parks in the United States.