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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 36

Offered January 14, 2026

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Designating August 1, in 2026 and each succeeding year, as Internet Safety and Online Predator Awareness Day.

Patron—Walker

Committee Referral Pending

WHEREAS, the internet is an essential tool for education, communication, and commerce, yet it also poses significant risks, including cyberbullying, identity theft, and exploitation by online predators; and

WHEREAS, in 2024, Virginians age 60 and older filed approximately 3,841 complaints with the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3), reporting losses exceeding \$106.6 million and placing the Commonwealth 11th among all states for elder fraud losses; and

WHEREAS, according to the FBI's national data, individuals age 60 and older filed the highest number of IC3 complaints and suffered more than \$4.8 billion in reported losses nationwide in 2024, contributing to total U.S. losses of \$16.6 billion across 859,532 complaints, a 33 percent increase over 2023; and

WHEREAS, child exploitation remains a critical concern, with an estimated 500,000 online predators active daily and one in five children age 10 to 17 reporting online solicitation by strangers; and

WHEREAS, youth in the United States are increasingly exposed to online dangers, with over half of teens reporting experiences with cyberbullying, and according to a 2025 study published in the *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 83 percent of children and adolescents have been exposed to content related to self-harm or suicide on social media; and

WHEREAS, it is vital to ensure a safer digital environment by fostering partnerships with law-enforcement agencies, schools, and community organizations to promote internet safety education and awareness; and

WHEREAS, public awareness, community education, and early intervention empower young people to recognize online dangers, reduce internet-related crimes, and promote a culture of digital safety and responsibility; and

WHEREAS, on Internet Safety and Online Predator Awareness Day, and every day, citizens are encouraged to recognize the importance of digital safety and take proactive steps to protect themselves and their loved ones online; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly designate August 1, in 2026 and each succeeding year, as Internet Safety and Online Predator Awareness Day; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates post the designation of this day on the General Assembly's website.