

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 25

Commending the Wicomico Pinn lineage of Northumberland County; recognizing documented leadership, descendant families, and land continuity; and honoring the contributions of Gail Janeen Smith Toliver, the Northern Neck Indigenous Heritage Council, and the Northern Neck Indigenous Heritage Foundation.

Agreed to by the Senate, January 15, 2026
 Agreed to by the House of Delegates, January 19, 2026

WHEREAS, the Wicomico people of Virginia, distinct from the similarly named Maryland Wicomico, occupied ancestral homelands along the lower Northern Neck, including the north bank of Dividing Creek in present-day Northumberland County, as documented in early colonial maps and records; and

WHEREAS, Captain John Smith, in 1608, recorded the Wicomico among the Indigenous peoples of Virginia and described Virginia Indians as having tawny brown skin, lighter than the Moors or slaves and darker than the Irish or Spaniards, establishing early English recognition of their distinct Indigenous identity; and

WHEREAS, William Strachey, secretary of the Virginia colony, further described Wicomico and allied Virginia Indian families, noting that infants were carried on their mothers' backs and that children were born with white skin but within one month turned a tawny brown, a trait observed even when mothers bore children with English colonists, reflecting early colonial understanding of Native identity distinct from African descent; and

WHEREAS, Sir William Berkeley, Governor of Virginia, oversaw treaties and land arrangements prior to 1776, including the 1646 Articles of Peace and the 1677 Treaty of Middle Plantation, which shaped the reservation era and legal status of Virginia Indian communities including the Wicomico; and

WHEREAS, Robert Beverley, Jr., writing in 1705, stated that in Northumberland the Wicomico had but three men living who yet kept up their Kingdom, identifying Pinn, Taptico, and Conchinchimo as the remaining leaders maintaining Wicomico political continuity at the close of the seventeenth century; and

WHEREAS, Robert Pinn, identified in colonial records by Beckley and later recognized by the Virginia General Assembly, is acknowledged as the first and only documented patriarchal Weroance of the Virginia Wicomico and is the eighth great grandfather of Gail Janeen Smith Toliver; and

WHEREAS, colonial, court, and county records establish Robert Pinn as the only individual formally recognized by the Virginia government as King and Weroance of the Wicomico Indian Town, and further demonstrate that Robert Pinn remained alive and continued to appear in court and land-related proceedings concerning Wicomico reservation lands after the death of William Tapp II, also rendered Taptico, during which period Robert Pinn was subjected to racial reclassification in the records as a means of taxation and dispossession; and

WHEREAS, Rawley, also rendered Raleigh or Rolly, Pinn, the fifth great grandfather of Gail Janeen Smith Toliver, and his son Howison Pinn, her fourth great grandfather, appear in eighteenth and early nineteenth century records demonstrating continuity of family presence, landholding, and community identity in Northumberland County; and

WHEREAS, Traverse Benjamin Pinn, Sr. (1840–1888), the third great grandfather of Gail Janeen Smith Toliver and son of Howison Pinn, served honorably during the Civil War as a Union Army scout and wagoner and later contributed as an inventor and community leader, exemplifying the endurance of Wicomico descendants through war, reclassification, and dispossession; and

WHEREAS, court, county, and genealogical records further establish that Minnie Lee Pinn, born Minnie Lee Evans, was a descendant of the Wicomico, demonstrating that Wicomico continuity extended through interconnected families, including the Evans and Pinn lines, and that these families were collectively subjected to the same processes of racial reclassification and dispossession affecting the Wicomico Indian Town and its descendants; and

WHEREAS, the Pinn Cemetery in Northumberland County constitutes an ancestral burial ground and site of cultural continuity for Wicomico descendants, providing physical evidence of multigenerational presence tied to the historic Indian Town; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly, through House Joint Resolution 644 (2011), House Joint Resolution 744 (2013), and Senate Joint Resolution 354 (2013), acknowledged historic Virginia Indian communities and recognized the need to address misclassification and erasure of Native identity; and

WHEREAS, the Acts of Assembly of 1997 provided statutory mechanisms to correct erroneous racial designations imposed under the 1924 Racial Integrity Act, enabling descendants of Virginia Indians to restore accurate identity in official records; and

WHEREAS, historical, genealogical, military, church, court, and legislative records associated with the

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Wiccocomico Indian Town and the Pinn line attest to descendant surnames including, without limitation, Pinn, Evans Tapp/Taptico, Nickens, Doggett, Veazey, Curtis, Jett, Wood, Mason, Scott, Brown, Brooks, Dennis, Cross, Bowlin, Page, Bourne, Goolsby, Bayse, Baskett, Pettus, Johnson, and King, among others documented in the public record; and

WHEREAS, Gail Janeen Smith Toliver, ceremonial historical Weroance of continuity for the Wiccocomico Pinn lineage, has devoted more than 25 years to researching, documenting, and preserving this history, assisting descendants in record correction, cemetery preservation, and historical recovery; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate of Virginia, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend the Wiccocomico Pinn lineage of Northumberland County; recognize the documented leadership of Robert Pinn and William Tapp II, acknowledge the continuity represented by Rawley Pinn, Howison Pinn, and Traverse Benjamin Pinn, Sr., affirm the significance of the land continuity represented by the Pinn Cemetery; and honor the contributions of Gail Janeen Smith Toliver, ceremonial historical Weroance of continuity, the Northern Neck Indigenous Heritage Council, and the Northern Neck Indigenous Heritage Foundation; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to Gail Janeen Smith Toliver, and to appropriate historical and archival bodies to support ongoing efforts toward documentation, preservation, and formal recognition of Wiccocomico descendants in the Commonwealth of Virginia.