

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 47

Designating May 21, in 2026 and in each succeeding year, as Eliza Kortright Monroe Hay Day in Virginia.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 11, 2026
Agreed to by the Senate, March 3, 2026

WHEREAS, James and Elizabeth Kortright Monroe welcomed their firstborn child, Elizabeth "Eliza" Kortright Monroe, at Spring Hill in King George County in December 1786; and

WHEREAS, Eliza Monroe spent the first years of her life in Fredericksburg, then moved to Albemarle County with her family in 1788; and

WHEREAS, over the course of James Monroe's career as a diplomat, Eliza Monroe lived in Great Britain, Spain, and France, where she was educated in a prestigious boarding school in Paris founded by Henriette Campan; and

WHEREAS, Eliza Monroe married George Hay, a Virginia district attorney, on September 28, 1808, and the couple resided near Richmond; and

WHEREAS, after James Monroe took office as the fifth president of the United States in 1817, Eliza Monroe Hay and her family moved into the White House and assisted with maintaining the presidential household due to her mother's declining health; and

WHEREAS, Eliza Monroe Hay oversaw revisions to White House social protocols and personally fulfilled numerous social obligations that had previously been the responsibility of the first lady, all while caring for her ailing mother; and

WHEREAS, over the course of her life, Eliza Monroe Hay willingly and selflessly provided nursing care for numerous sick family members and friends; during several epidemics, she also volunteered to care for residents of Washington, D.C., at great risk to her own health; and

WHEREAS, after the conclusion of the Monroe presidency in 1825, Eliza Monroe Hay moved into her parents' home, Oak Hill, in Loudoun County; and

WHEREAS, between September 1830 and July 1831, Eliza Monroe Hay experienced the death of her husband, mother, and father; she suffered the death of her only surviving child, Hortensia, in 1834, then traveled to France in 1838 on the advice that a sea voyage would improve her health; and

WHEREAS, while living in Paris, Eliza Monroe Hay became ill and, having been denied her inheritance by the executors of her father's estate, was unable to return home; she died destitute on January 27, 1840, at the age of 53 and she was interred in Père Lachaise Cemetery, in an unmarked grave; and

WHEREAS, in 2018, Kathryn Willis of Fredericksburg traveled to Paris and learned that Eliza Monroe Hay's gravesite had been become overgrown with vines and was in a state of severe disrepair; and

WHEREAS, a repatriation campaign known as the Bringing Eliza Home Project was established in 2023 with the support of Eliza Monroe Hay's descendants, the Historic Fredericksburg Foundation, Inc., the James Monroe Museum and Memorial Library, and other stakeholders; the program was led by Barbara VornDick, a part-time docent at James Monroe's Highland and the foremost biographer on Eliza Monroe Hay; and

WHEREAS, Eliza Monroe Hay's remains were successfully repatriated to the United States on May 21, 2025, and she was interred with her father, mother, and sister in the Monroe family plot at Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond on October 23, 2025; and

WHEREAS, known for her devotion to family, fortitude, generosity, compassion, and sense of duty, Eliza Monroe Hay serves as an inspiration for all Virginians; and

WHEREAS, Eliza Kortright Monroe Hay Day provides an occasion to learn more about her life and legacy, as well as the achievements of President James Monroe and the Monroe family, and to pursue opportunities for historical preservation and volunteer leadership; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly designate May 21, in 2026 and in each succeeding year, as Eliza Kortright Monroe Hay Day in Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit a copy of this resolution to the Bringing Eliza Home Project, so that members of the program may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter; and, be it

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

ENROLLED

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