

HR 9041

2016

1 House Resolution

2 A resolution recognizing February 21, 2016, as Fort
3 Myers Founders' Day in commemoration of the 150th
4 anniversary of the founding of Fort Myers.

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6 WHEREAS, February 21, 2016, is the 150th anniversary of the
7 founding of the Fort Myers community by Captain Manuel A.
8 Gonzalez, and

9 WHEREAS, Manuel A. Gonzalez departed from his home in
10 Asturias, Spain, at age 14 in 1846 and traveled to Florida where
11 he became a naturalized United States citizen in Key West in
12 1859, and

13 WHEREAS, a federal garrison on the bank of the
14 Caloosahatchee River known as "Fort Myers" had been abandoned
15 after the Seminole Indian Wars and reoccupied by Union soldiers
16 in December 1863, and

17 WHEREAS, Manuel A. Gonzalez served as a captain in a civil
18 detachment that assisted the Union Army, delivering mail and
19 other supplies by sailboat to troops at Fort Myers during the
20 Civil War, and

21 WHEREAS, the Union Army abandoned Fort Myers in 1865 just
22 before the end of the Civil War, leaving the area of present-day
23 Fort Myers an uninhabited wilderness, and

24 WHEREAS, on February 21, 1866, Manuel A. Gonzalez, his
25 five-year-old son Manuel S. Gonzalez, his brother-in-law John
26 Weatherford, and their friend Joseph A. Vivas, having left Key

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27 West in a small skiff, sailed to the site of the abandoned
 28 federal garrison to establish a community, and

29 WHEREAS, Manuel A. Gonzalez and his son spent their first
 30 night near the corner of present-day First and Jackson streets
 31 in Fort Myers while Joseph A. Vivas returned to Key West to lead
 32 his wife, Christiana, and Manuel A. Gonzalez's wife, Evalina,
 33 and daughter, Mary, to Fort Myers, and

34 WHEREAS, Manuel A. Gonzalez established the first trading
 35 post in the region and fostered peaceful relations with nearby
 36 members of the Seminole Tribe, and

37 WHEREAS, Evalina Weatherford Gonzalez established the first
 38 school in Southwest Florida, where she taught all grade levels
 39 for many years, and is credited with starting what later became
 40 the Lee County School System, and

41 WHEREAS, Manuel A. Gonzalez, Joseph A. Vivas, and their
 42 families undertook great personal risks to establish the Fort
 43 Myers community, and their contributions to the settlement and
 44 development of Southwest Florida include the incorporation of
 45 the City of Fort Myers on August 12, 1885, by Manuel S. Gonzalez
 46 and others, NOW, THEREFORE,

47
 48 Be It Resolved by the House of Representatives of the State of
 49 Florida:

50
 51 That February 21, 2016, is recognized as Fort Myers
 52 Founders' Day in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the

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53 | founding of the Fort Myers community and the contributions of
54 | Manuel A. Gonzalez and his family to the development of
55 | Southwest Florida.