

No. R-39. House concurrent resolution commemorating the 240th anniversary of the Vermont Constitution.

(H.C.R.22)

Offered by: Representatives Devereux of Mount Holly, Bartholomew of Hartland, and Belaski of Windsor

Offered by: Senators Clarkson, McCormack, and Nitka

Whereas, on January 15, 1777, delegates representing 28 towns convened in Westminster and declared independence from Great Britain of the New Hampshire Grants (subsequently named Vermont), and

Whereas, this declaration did not include a constitution to serve as the jurisdiction's organic governance document, and

Whereas, in recognition of this important omission, these same delegates reconvened in Windsor on June 4, 1777 to draft the first Vermont Constitution, and

Whereas, the delegates began their important work, drawing on the Pennsylvania Constitution that Benjamin Franklin drafted, and

Whereas, the Vermonters revised the Pennsylvania document, adding several pioneering provisions that included prohibiting adult slavery, granting all men, regardless of their property ownership or level of income, the right to vote, and requiring the creation of public schools, and

Whereas, the towns then elected a second contingent of delegates, who met in Windsor on July 2, 1777 to complete the drafting of the document, and

Whereas, while the newly elected delegates deliberated, the War of Independence was raging to the west, as the British captured Fort Ticonderoga and Fort Independence, and

Whereas, when this momentous military news reached Windsor on July 8, 1777, the delegates representing the immediately affected towns sought to adjourn, but a violent thunderstorm forced all to remain in the meeting hall, and

Whereas, the inclement weather was the backdrop for the delegates' completion of the document before the start of another day, and

Whereas, the Vermont Constitution enumerated the fundamental reasons why Vermont was established, including to enable Vermonters "to enjoy their natural rights, and the other blessings that the Author of existence has bestowed upon man," and it set forth a framework of government, now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly commemorates the 240th anniversary of the Vermont Constitution, and be it further

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Vermont Historical Society, the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation, and the Windsor Town Clerk.