

State of Vermont

House of Representatives



Montpelier, Vermont

Concurrent House Resolution

H.C.R. 229

House concurrent resolution commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Grand Army of the Republic's General Order relating to Decoration Day (Memorial Day)

Offered by: Representatives Devereux of Mount Holly, Fagan of Rutland City, Gannon of Wilmington, Helm of Fair Haven, Kitzmiller of Montpelier, Lewis of Berlin, and Townsend of South Burlington

Offered by: Senators Benning, Branagan, Brooks, Nitka, and Sears

Whereas, the origins of the springtime honoring of fallen soldiers can be traced to Charleston, South Carolina, where in the spring of 1865, African-Americans, most of them former slaves, held a series of memorial ceremonies honoring Union soldiers who had died during the Civil War, and

Whereas, the Washington Race Course and Jockey Club in Charleston, South Carolina, had served as a prison for Union soldiers at which 257 men died and were hastily buried, and

Whereas, the African-American community reburied the soldiers, constructed an archway at the cemetery's entrance on which were inscribed the words "Martyrs of the Race Course," and 10,000 community members staged a memorial parade at this site, and

Whereas, the direct lineage of the Memorial Day holiday, originally referred to as Decoration Day, is attributed to the Grand Army of the Republic, an organization established in 1866 to remember and honor Union soldiers, and

Whereas, on May 5, 1868, Grand Army of the Republic Commander-in-Chief John Logan issued General Order No. 11, designating May 30 as a date for "decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village and hamlet churchyard in the land," and

Whereas, as an immediate response, 27 states conducted some form of Decoration Day ceremony in 1868, and

Whereas, by the 1880s, May 30 was starting to be referred to as Memorial Day, although the term Decoration Day was still broadly used, and

Whereas, by 1890, all of the states that had remained in the Union during the Civil War were observing Decoration Day, and

Whereas, in 1950, Congress enacted Pub. L. No. 512, a joint resolution requesting that the President issue a proclamation designating Memorial Day as a day for a Nation-wide prayer for peace, and

Whereas, it was not until 1968, a century after the 1868 General Order, that Congress enacted the Uniform Monday Holiday Act (Pub. L. No. 90-363), which took effect in 1971, designating Memorial Day as a federal holiday, now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly commemorates the 150th anniversary of the Grand Army of the Republic's General Order relating to Decoration Day (Memorial Day), and be it further

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Vermont Historical Society.