

No. R-148. House concurrent resolution congratulating the Bennington Free Library on its 160th anniversary.

(H.C.R.124)

Offered by Representatives Morrissey of Bennington, Cooper of Pownal, Corcoran of Bennington, Durfee of Shaftsbury, Greer of Bennington, and Nigro of Bennington

Offered by Senators Bongartz and Plunkett

Whereas, a community-oriented public library can serve as a major contributor to the civic, cultural, and educational vibrancy of a Vermont municipality, and

Whereas, the Bennington Free Library (BFL), with a mission to “provide a dynamic, welcoming environment that enriches lives...[and] promotes lifelong learning and literacy,” epitomizes this goal, and

Whereas, the long and proud history of the BFL dates from June 23, 1865, when Trenor W. Park and Seth B. Hunt deeded a Main Street property and their collection of 1,800 books to the library’s original five trustees for the new library, which was located on the building’s second floor and which was originally under the organizational auspices of the Young Men’s Association and the capable leadership of the first librarian, Charles W. Smith, and

Whereas, membership was opened to all for the price of one dollar, but women’s borrowing privileges were restricted to one volume at a time, and

Whereas, in 1892, when the library’s growth demanded a more commodious space, it relocated to the building’s downstairs floor; then in 1936, as the collection expanded and patronage increased, the BFL constructed a new purposely built Georgian style structure on the same lot, with a skylight of the solar system, reportedly composed of Tiffany glass; and a half-century later, the two buildings were connected, and

Whereas, in 2005, the library’s operational systems transitioned to the digital era, and in 2014, a major software upgrade coincided with the BFL joining a consortium of 25 libraries, and

Whereas, late fines were abolished in 2020, and finally in 2024, the membership fee was eliminated, both of which ended borrowing disincentives, and

Whereas, in 2025, the BFL’s 55,000-item collection encompasses books, periodicals, DVDs, snowshoes, a telescope, and museum passes; services offered include book delivery for homebound patrons, public-use computers, interlibrary loans, a variety of public programs, and a great staff that the BFL’s 23rd librarian, Wendy M. Sharkey, expertly directs, *now therefore be it*

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly congratulates the Bennington Free Library on its 160th anniversary, *and be it further*

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