

House Resolution 1764

By: Representatives Meadows of the 5th, Jasperse of the 11th, and Ridley of the 6th

A RESOLUTION

1 Recognizing the New Echota Historic Site and urging members of the public to study the
2 history that occurred there; and for other purposes.

3 WHEREAS, New Echota, the capital of the Cherokee Nation from 1825 until the forced
4 removal of the Cherokees in the 1830s, was located at the confluence of the Coosawattee and
5 Conasauga Rivers in the North Georgia mountains; and archeological evidence has shown
6 that the site of New Echota had been occupied by ancient indigenous cultures prior to the
7 arrival of the Cherokees; and

8 WHEREAS, on November 12, 1825, New Echota was officially designated as the capital of
9 the Cherokee Nation; and the tribal council also began a building program that included
10 construction of a two-story council house; a supreme court, and later, the office of the first
11 Indian language newspaper, the *Cherokee Phoenix*, which used the new syllabary created by
12 the Cherokee scholar Sequoyah; and

13 WHEREAS, the Cherokees' sovereign right to their land and nation was confirmed by the
14 United State Supreme Court in the case of Worcester vs. Georgia, in which Chief Justice
15 John Marshall opined that the relationship between the Indian Nations and the United States
16 is that of nations, and that the federal government had the sole right to deal with the Indian
17 nations in North America, but that right did not include the rights of possession to their land
18 or political dominion over their laws; and

19 WHEREAS, in 1832, after Congressional passage of the Indian Removal Act, Georgia
20 included Cherokee territory in its Sixth Land Lottery, allocating Cherokee land to white
21 settlers, although the Cherokee Nation had never ceded the land to the state; and over the
22 next six years, the Georgia Guard operated against the Cherokees, evicting them from their
23 properties; by 1834, New Echota was becoming a ghost town, and council meetings were
24 moved to Red Clay, Cherokee Nation, now in Tennessee; and

25 WHEREAS, as the General Assembly recalled in a 1997 resolution dedicating the Trail of
26 Tears Highway: "New Echota was converted from the capital of a nation to a holding pen for
27 the human inhabitants of that nation as they were rounded up and corralled like cattle to
28 embark on one of the most sordid chapters in our state's history, the forced migration of the
29 Cherokee people from their native Southeastern foothills and mountains to Oklahoma, an
30 event that lives in infamy as the Trail of Tears"; and

31 WHEREAS, after the Cherokees were removed, their capital remained abandoned for more
32 than 100 years. Much of New Echota disappeared until in March 1954, when the
33 archeologist Lewis Larsen from the Georgia Historical Commission and five other men were
34 sent to oversee the work of excavating the site; and when the team uncovered evidence not
35 only of the Cherokee settlement in New Echota, but also of earlier American Indian cultures,
36 they asked the National Park Service archeologist, Joe Caldwell, and two additional workers
37 to join them for the next two months as they continued excavation; and

38 WHEREAS, on March 13, 1957, the State of Georgia authorized reconstruction of the town
39 of New Echota as a state park, with the reconstruction of such buildings as the council house;
40 the supreme court; the print shop; a building of the *Cherokee Phoenix*; a common Cherokee
41 cabin representing the home of an average family; and a middle-class Cherokee home,
42 including outbuildings, as well as the restoration of Vann's Tavern, owned by Chief James
43 Vann; and in 1962, the New Echota Historic Site was opened to the public, which includes
44 the Newtown Trail, a 1.2 mile interpreted trail that takes tourists to Town Creek, where the
45 majority of the Cherokees had camped when the council was in session; in 1973, the
46 Department of Natural Resources took over New Echota Park and continues to operate and
47 maintain this historic site; and

48 WHEREAS, it is imminently appropriate for the members of this body to recognize the
49 importance of the New Echota site, where so much Georgia history unfurled, and to
50 recommend to members of the public that they study the events that occurred there and to
51 visit the site.

52 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that
53 the members of this body recognize the New Echota Historic Site and urge members of the
54 public to visit the site and study its history.

55 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized
56 and directed to make an appropriate copy of this resolution available for distribution to the
57 public and the press.