

Senate Resolution 815

By: Senators Kennedy of the 18th and Sims of the 12th

A RESOLUTION

1 Recognizing February 25, 2020, as Fort Valley State University Day at the state capitol in
2 recognition of the university's 125th anniversary; and for other purposes.

3 WHEREAS, on November 6, 1895, an interracial group of men, at least half of whom were
4 former slaves, petitioned the Superior Court of Houston County, Georgia, to legalize the
5 creation of a school to "promote the cause of mental and manual education in the State of
6 Georgia," and the Fort Valley High and Industrial School was born; and

7 WHEREAS, historically referred to as "the light in the valley," Fort Valley State University
8 is one of few colleges founded by former slaves, including founders John Wesley Davison,
9 Virgil Gideon Barnett, Peter Fann, Henry Lowman, Thomas McAfee, James Isaac Miller,
10 Charlie H. Nixon, and Thomas W. Williams, who bonded with founders Stephen Elisha
11 Bassett, Allen Cooper, Francis W. Gano, John Howard Hale, David Jones, J.R. Jones, D.L.
12 Lawrence, Alonzo L. Nixon, and Lee O'Neal; and

13 WHEREAS, Fort Valley High and Industrial School changed its name to Fort Valley Normal
14 and Industrial School in 1932; and

15 WHEREAS, in 1939, the State of Georgia acquired Fort Valley Normal and Industrial
16 School and designated it a four-year senior college named Fort Valley State College, and
17 after the creation of Fort Valley State College, the state's higher education efforts for African
18 Americans in Middle Georgia were concentrated there; and

19 WHEREAS, in 1942, the United States Office of Education noted that Fort Valley State
20 College was one of few black colleges with a "clear statement of purpose"; and

21 WHEREAS, Fort Valley State University boasts several notable alumni, including The
22 Honorable Austin Thomas Walden, Georgia's first African American judge after
23 Reconstruction; The Honorable Edith Ingram Grant, Georgia's first African American female

24 judge; professional football Hall of Famer Larry Rayfield Wright; track and field Olympian
25 Catherine Hardy Lavender; Georgia's 2017 Teacher of the Year, Casey Bethel; Mayor
26 Barbara B. Williams, the first African American female mayor of Fort Valley, Georgia, and
27 Georgia's first female band director; State Senator Freddie Powell Sims; and State
28 Representatives Patty Bentley of House District 139, Brian Prince of District 127, Valencia
29 Stovall of District 74, and Representative Calvin Smyre, the youngest elected member of the
30 Georgia House of Representatives, the longest serving member of the Georgia legislature,
31 and the first African American chair of the Democratic State Legislative Caucus; and

32 WHEREAS, the university ranks among the top ten colleges in Georgia in the number of
33 African Americans earning bachelor's degrees in psychology and physical sciences, and 100
34 percent of graduates with degrees in education pass the state certification examination or
35 become gainfully employed in careers related to education within one month of graduation;
36 and

37 WHEREAS, under the current leadership of Dr. Paul Jones, president of the university, Fort
38 Valley State University has empowered people to use education as a pathway to maximize
39 their potential through invention, intellectual fulfillment, civic leadership, and meaningful
40 careers; and

41 WHEREAS, as expressed in its first academic catalog as a college, the institution exists to
42 give students a better chance in life and to help uplift people wherever it can, through its
43 graduates.

44 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE that the members of this body
45 recognize February 25, 2020, as Fort Valley State University Day at the state capitol in
46 recognition of the university's 125th anniversary.

47 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Senate is authorized and directed
48 to make an appropriate copy of this resolution available for distribution to Fort Valley State
49 University.