Contributions of General Bernardo De Gálvez Recognized by Florida Legislature

In an effort to encourage writers and publishers of United States history textbooks to include Hispanic contributions to the nation, Frank de Varona, Associate Superintendent of Dade County Public Schools in Miami, Florida, drafted a concurrent resolution recognizing General Bernardo de Gálvez and the role of Hispanics in the American Revolution. Mr. de Varona's efforts were inspired by the Honorable Eric Martel, Consul General of Spain in Miami, who informed de Varona of a similar Texas legislative resolution regarding General de Gálvez.
The resolution was approved by the House of Representatives and the Senate of the State of Florida during the 1990 legislative session. Through the resolution, the Florida Legislature urges the Florida State Board of Education to adopt textbooks that include the significant contributions of Hispanics and encourages the sixty-seven school districts throughout the state to include Hispanic contributions in the present courses of study in kindergarten through the twelfth grade.

WHEREAS, The valuable and significant contributions of Hispanics fighting under the flag of Spain to the American Revolution have been totally omitted or barely mentioned in United States history textbooks used in colleges, universities, and schools throughout our nation; and

WHEREAS, The name of General Bernardo de Gálvez is virtually unknown in our country in spite of his heroic deeds and crucial military campaign against the British forces in the Mississippi Valley and the Gulf of Mexico; and

WHEREAS, One looks in vain for any reference to the many battles fought by Spanish, Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Dominican, Venezuelan, and other Hispanic soldiers under the command of General Gálvez in United States history textbooks; and

WHEREAS, The reasons for this historical omission are puzzling in light of the United States history textbooks accounts of the aid rendered by France and of other non-Hispanic foreigners who fought for American independence; and

WHEREAS, The 1.4 million Hispanics living in Florida and the twenty million living in our nation today have a right to know that their ancestors also bled in the fight for independence and contributed to the establishment of the first democracy in the modern world; and

WHEREAS, The entire nation should be aware of the Hispanic participation in the American War for Independence; and

WHEREAS, King Charles III of Spain donated more than two million pounds to the American colonies; and

WHEREAS, Bernardo de Gálvez was appointed Governor of Louisiana by Charles III on New Year's Day, 1777, at the age of twenty-nine; and

WHEREAS, Bernardo de Gálvez upon his arrival in New Orleans began to assist the American revolutionaries with money, guns, munitions, medicine, food, blankets, clothes, and other essential supplies; and

WHEREAS, Bernardo de Gálvez's assistance was crucial to the success of the campaign of General George Rogers Clark in the west as well as the Virginia campaign in the east; and

WHEREAS, After Spain declared war on Great Britain on June 21, 1779, Governor Gálvez with barely 1,450 men and without waiting for reinforcements from Cuba and Mexico, captured the five British forts along the Mississippi Valley: Manchak, Baton Rouge, Panmure (Natchez), Thomson, and Amith; and

WHEREAS, General George Washington congratulated Juan de Miralles, the Spanish agent in Philadelphia, on Gálvez's successful campaign ending British control on the Mississippi Valley; and

WHEREAS, General Gálvez, with the assistance of soldiers and supplies brought from Cuba, captured Mobile on March 14, 1780, after twenty days of siege; and

WHEREAS, The King of Spain promoted Bernardo de Gálvez to Marshall of the Army and named him Governor of Louisiana and Mobile for his victory at Mobile that resulted in the capture of three hundred British soldiers; and

WHEREAS, General Gálvez attacked Pensacola, a city defended by 2,500 British and Indian soldiers, with an army of 7,000 men: 4,000 from Cuba, 2,000 from Mexico and the rest from Puerto Rico, Santo Domingo, Haiti, Venezuela, and New Orleans; and

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WHEREAS, There were Cuban-born soldiers both black and white who fought bravely during the battle of Pensacola; and

WHEREAS, General Gálvez in an act of supreme heroism entered the well-protected Pensacola harbor under heavy fire from a British fort virtually alone aboard a small ship to set the example for his army and navy; and

WHEREAS, General Gálvez was wounded during the battle of Pensacola; and

WHEREAS, General Gálvez was ably assisted at the battle of Pensacola by Cuban-born General Juan Manuel de Cagigal and his aide-de-camp the Venezuelan Francisco de Miranda, who is called the precursor of South American independence, as well as Spanish Admiral José Solano and Spanish General José de Expeleta; and

WHEREAS, After two months of heavy fighting, the British surrendered Pensacola on May 8, 1781, losing their last stronghold in the Gulf of Mexico; and

WHEREAS, Even though current United States history textbooks do not mention the battle of Pensacola, this was one of the most decisive battles of the American Revolution; and

WHEREAS, General Gálvez's campaign along the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico broke the British army's will to fight and prevented the British from gathering a strong army to battle General George Washington at Yorktown; and

WHEREAS, General Gálvez's military exploits together with 1.2 million pounds raised by the ladies and merchants of Havana for the armies of General Washington and General Rochambeau were of utmost importance in the defeat of British General Charles Cornwallis at Yorktown on October 31, 1781; and

WHEREAS, The King of Spain changed the name of Pensacola Bay to Santa María de Gálvez and to commemorate the daring entrance to the bay under the heavy fire, awarded General Gálvez a coat of arms showing Gálvez on a ship with the inscription *Yo Sólo* or I Alone; and

WHEREAS, General Bernardo de Gálvez was a hero and friend of the American people and is deserving of recognition; and

WHEREAS, It is most appropriate that the Florida Legislature pay tribute to his role and that of Hispanic soldiers in the American Revolution; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Florida Legislature acknowledges the importance of the role of Spain and other Hispanic countries in winning American independence and recognizes General Bernardo de Gálvez for his decisive military campaigns and his significant contribution toward American history; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Florida Legislature hereby urge historians and publishers of United States history textbooks to include the significant contributions of Hispanics to the American Revolution, and the Florida State Board of Education request such recognition in the state-adopted history textbooks; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Florida Legislature encourage school districts across the state to include the contributions of Hispanics to the American Revolution and to the growth and development of our country from 1492 to the present in courses of study in kindergarten through the twelfth grade; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Florida Legislature encourage the Board of Regents and the Junior College Boards across the state to promote research and publication of the materials regarding the Hispanic contributions to our great nation.

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