



# VIRGINIA SOCIETY SONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

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January 25, 2018

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Hon. William M. Stanley, Jr., Chairman  
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The Senate of Virginia  
Pocahontas Building, Room E610  
900 East Main Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Hon. Riley E. Ingram, Chairman  
Counties, Cities and Towns Committee  
The Virginia House of Delegates  
Pocahontas Building  
900 East Main Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

On behalf of the more than 2,300 members of the Virginia SAR, I write to express our strongest possible opposition to a series of bills that have been introduced in the General Assembly that would eliminate or substantially weaken the legal protection that monuments and memorials relating to the Revolutionary War currently enjoy. The Patriots of the American Revolution are the Founders of this country. To remove monuments that are dedicated to the Founders or that mark the battles fought and sacrifices made to bring this country into existence would be to deny the achievements of the Founding Generation and call into question the principles on which our country is based.

Dr. Clarence Jones – the African-American speechwriter who helped the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. craft his 1963 "I Have a Dream" address – has been quoted as explaining that while some of the founders of this country "were morally compromised in their effort to fashion together this new country, a republic, based on the principles and precepts enshrined in the Declaration of Independence," there is no reason to disavow those Founders because "they devoted their life to saving and founding this country." J. Sheerin, *Should Washington and Jefferson Monuments Come Down?*, THE ECONOMIST (Aug. 18, 2017). Their accomplishment in establishing a country based on equality, freedom, democracy and the rule of law – which was entirely unique at the time – has benefitted all Americans, regardless of race, sex or creed, and it will always be worth remembering and

honoring. The Revolution belongs to all Americans, and all Americans can be proud of the principles on which our country was founded and the imperfect men and women who first asserted, fought and died for those principles.

Virginia has appropriately protected the monuments and memorials relating to the Revolutionary War for more than 125 years. That enviable record of historic preservation should not be abandoned by the adoption of legislation like HB 1225, HB 1097, HB 1098, SB 444, and SB 733. HB 1225 would allow the removal of any monument dedicated to war veterans. SB 444 would give localities the right to move, remove or alter monuments and statues within their own jurisdiction, regardless of when they were erected. HB 1097 would allow a governing body of a locality in which a monument or memorial is located to relocate the monument or memorial to a museum of the locality's choice. HB 1098 and SB 733 would allow local governments to relocate any monument or memorial erected prior to 1900 to an outdoor location on the grounds of a locality-owned history museum that is located within one-quarter mile of the existing site. These bills, as written, reject America's Founders and its founding values, and they should never become the law of this Commonwealth.

The members of the Virginia SAR hope and trust that you will be among the delegates and senators who act to protect the memory and legacy of the black, white, Hispanic and Native American men and women who helped establish this country and launched the great American experiment in self-government.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Michael J. Elston".

Michael J. Elston  
President