

2023-J2552

Senate Resolution No. 2552

BY: Senator HINCHEY

COMMEMORATING the 150th Anniversary of the
Hudson-Athens Lighthouse

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to recognize and pay tribute to those organizations of high purpose and worthy accomplishment whose endeavors have faithfully served the welfare of the citizens of the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse upon the occasion of celebrating its 150th Anniversary on Saturday, June 1, 2024; and

WHEREAS, In the Hudson River lies Middle Ground Flats, a large sandbar that historically divided the river for nearly two miles, wreaking havoc on unsuspecting steamboats, cargo ships, tugboats, and other commercial and recreational vessels; and

WHEREAS, To warn mariners of the danger, after much petitioning to the United States Congress, an appropriation of \$35,000 to begin construction on the Hudson City Light, now known as the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse, was approved in 1872; its inaugural oil lamp was lighted by the first lightkeeper, Henry Best, in 1874; and

WHEREAS, The Hudson-Athens Lighthouse is in the center of the Hudson

River, accessible only by boat and equidistant from the City of Hudson and the Village of Athens; it is one of seven remaining lighthouses on the Hudson River and one of two remaining lighthouses surrounded by water; and

WHEREAS, The eight-room Hudson-Athens Lighthouse is an engineering marvel with its northern corner shaped like a ship's prow to deflect ice floes and its granite foundation blocks resting on 200 wooden pilings driven 50 feet into the riverbed, packed with protective mud, and held in place by huge boulder rip rap; this shining icon is documented by nine architectural drawings in the Library of Congress; and

WHEREAS, The United States Coast Guard automated the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse's lamp in 1949, eliminating lightkeepers and ending building maintenance; and

WHEREAS, Over the decades, neglect, weather, and river conditions have taken a toll on the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse; it now faces an existential threat from unintended damage caused by commercial vessels passing in the nearby navigation channel which is maintained by the United States Army Corps of Engineers; and

WHEREAS, In 1982, a small group of citizens formed the nonprofit Hudson-Athens Lighthouse Preservation Society with the mission to save the lighthouse and share its rich history, leasing it in 1984 from the United States Coast Guard and receiving ownership in 2000; and

WHEREAS, The Hudson-Athens Lighthouse is now an active, chartered New York State museum and is listed on the New York State and National Registers of Historic Places; and

WHEREAS, The Hudson-Athens Lighthouse continues to be enjoyed by the

community, providing popular tours for school children, residents, and visitors from near and far; and

WHEREAS, On May 1, 2024, the National Trust for Historic Preservation designated the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse as one of 11 Most Endangered Places because of the imminent threat to the lighthouse as well as its historic value and multi-faceted role in the identities of its communities, the region, and the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Together with individual, local, state, and federal partners, the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse Preservation Society is relentlessly working to secure necessary funds to preserve, restore, and protect the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse, from the riverbed to its tower light, for another 100 years; and

WHEREAS, On June 1, 2024, a Hudson River flotilla of more than 100 vessels of all shapes, sizes, and purposes will mark the 150th Anniversary of the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse and launch a summer of celebratory activities and events; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body that when individuals and organizations of such noble aims and accomplishments are brought to our attention, they should be celebrated and recognized by all the citizens of this great Empire State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse Preservation Society.