

2015-J6453

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating the 25th Annual William Henry Seward Birthday Celebration in the Village of Florida, New York, on May 14, 2016

WHEREAS, New York State has long been the birthplace and home to great historical figures, men and women who, through their great personal and professional achievements, have furthered the causes of humanity, government, education, medicine, social reform and science; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 25th Annual William Henry Seward Birthday Celebration in the Village of Florida, New York, feted on Saturday, May 14, 2016; and

WHEREAS, Twenty-five years ago, Gary Randall, the President of the Florida Historical Society, called for a gathering of about 10 local residents interested in preserving, protecting, and presenting local history; and

WHEREAS, John Kimieclk, a lifelong Florida resident, a member of the Historical Society, a Seward family historian, and teacher at S.S. Seward Institute, suggested the first William Henry Seward Birthday Celebration; for the last 25 years, this event has been held close to May 16th, which is William's birthday; and

WHEREAS, At that inaugural celebration, a myriad of events were held to recognize this important man's birthday, such as a wreath laying ceremony, the dedication of a bust of William Henry Seward, designed by Daniel Chester French, and guest speakers offered recollections of the early 20th Century development of the Village of Florida; and

WHEREAS, Under the direction of Diane Leo, a teacher at Golden Elementary, fourth grade students performed skits and sang the Seward Song, a tradition which continues today; since 2001, Mark Stewart's seventh

grade class have been participating in different ways, emphasizing the accomplishments of William Henry Seward and sharing interesting information about his family; and

WHEREAS, This year's festivities included a post card history presentation depicting the changes to the community through the years, and a photo display of the Seward Monument and Veterans Memorial, the Village Hall, the cemetery, the Florida Fire Department, and the building where William Henry Seward was born; and

WHEREAS, In addition, books on history were donated to the Florida Public Library and the Florida Public Schools, and some of the members of the Florida Historical Society dressed in clothing reflecting the second half of the 19th Century; and

WHEREAS, After searching through books, the young historians at Golden Hill Elementary and S.S. Seward Institute adopted a persona and became an expert in the Village of Florida history for the year they chose; the presentation covered the years 1703 to 1902; and

WHEREAS, William Henry Seward was born in Florida on May 16, 1801, and died in Auburn, New York, on October 12, 1872, where he spent much of his adult life; and

WHEREAS, William Henry Seward made a monumental impact in the histories of not only Orange county, but New York State and the entire country, serving in numerous leadership capacities such as New York Senator, New York Governor, United States Senator and Secretary of State for both the Lincoln and Johnson administrations; and

WHEREAS, Sympathetic to the plights of runaway slaves, William Henry Seward offered his home in Auburn as a stop on the Underground Railroad, where he hid slaves on their way to Canada; and

WHEREAS, In 1867, William Henry Seward acquired Alaska for the United States from Russia; through the years he tried in vain to purchase Hawaii and the Dutch West Indies, as well as build a canal in Panama; all of which came to fruition long after his death; and

WHEREAS, After a failed presidential bid in 1860, William Henry Seward served as President Abraham Lincoln's Secretary of State; in this capacity, he was instrumental in the passage of the Emancipation Proclamation; and

WHEREAS, Bound to his roots, William Henry Seward was a vital part of the S.S. Seward Institute in Florida, New York, a school which his father had founded in 1846; and

WHEREAS, William Henry Seward will forever be remembered for his achievements in office, and for his foresight in anticipating the future needs of the United States; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to commend the efforts of those organizations which seek to bring recognition to esteemed historical figures who lived in the State of New York, and in doing so, help to ensure that the complete history of our State and Nation is preserved and shared with present generations of citizens; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is pleased to have this opportunity to express its highest admiration for William Henry Seward, and for all of the individuals who have worked to bring proper attention to an individual and time which merits recognition in the grand panorama of the history of our State and Nation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 25th Annual William Henry Seward Birthday Celebration in the Village of Florida, New York, on May 14, 2016; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the Florida Historical Society.