



1 HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The Cherokee Indians were once a great tribe
3 living in and around the Great Smoky Mountains; they were
4 probably the most civilized tribe in America with well
5 established churches and schools; they are credited with an
6 independent development of the log cabin; the Cherokees had
7 their own recorded code of tribal laws with elected officials
8 to govern them; they adopted the white man's ways and
9 Christianity and were skilled at farming and cattle raising;
10 and

11 WHEREAS, With the discovery of gold on Cherokee lands, a
12 movement that had been gathering since about 1802 for the
13 removal of all Indians to reservations began in earnest; the
14 Georgia legislature passed a law that "no Indian or descendants
15 of an Indian shall be deemed a competent witness in any case in
16 court to which a white person may be a party"; other states
17 containing Cherokee lands adopted similar laws; and

18 WHEREAS, Many Cherokees were given whiskey by whites, who
19 took advantage of their drunkenness and bribed the Indians out
20 of their land holdings with paltry sums of money and empty
21 promises; about 2,000 moved west through this trickery; some
22 15,000 were not fooled by these methods and were forced to walk
23 the "Trail of Tears", as it became known for its many hardships
24 and sorrows it brought to their people; and

25 WHEREAS, President Andrew Jackson gave his full support to
26 the removal of the Cherokees from their land; an armed force of
27 7,000 made up of militia, regular army, and volunteers under
28 General Winfield Scott forced the remaining 15,000 Cherokees
29 from their homes in the Great Smoky Mountains and removed them
30 to stockades at the U.S. Indian Agency near Charleston,
31 Tennessee; their homes were burned and their property destroyed
32 and plundered; farms belonging to the Cherokees for generations

1 were won by white settlers in a lottery; and

2 WHEREAS, The march of 1,000 miles began in the winter of
3 1838; carrying only a few light blankets and wearing scant
4 clothing with daily rations of only salt pork and corn meal,
5 many sickened and died along the way; medical care was nearly
6 non-existent; only the very old, sick, and small children could
7 be carried in wagons or ride on horseback; over 8,000 were on
8 foot, most without shoes or moccasins; they crossed Tennessee
9 and Kentucky; about the 3rd of December, 1838, they arrived in
10 Southern Illinois at Golconda; and

11 WHEREAS, To reach Golconda from Kentucky, the Cherokee had
12 to cross the Ohio River; they were forced to pay \$1 a head for a
13 ferry passage on "Berry's Ferry" operating out of Golconda,
14 which was rather exorbitant because it normally cost only 12
15 and half cents for a Conestoga wagon and all you could carry;
16 "Berry's Ferry" made over \$10,000 that winter out of the
17 pockets of the starving Cherokees; they were not allowed
18 passage until the ferry had serviced all others wishing to
19 cross and were forced to take shelter under "Mantle Rock," a
20 shelter bluff on the Kentucky side, until "Berry had nothing
21 better to do"; many died huddled together at Mantle Rock
22 waiting to cross; and

23 WHEREAS, Many contagious diseases spread among the tribe
24 during their journey - cholera, whooping cough, and small pox;
25 the Cherokee were given used blankets from a hospital in
26 Tennessee where an epidemic of small pox had broken out;
27 because of the diseases, the Indians were not allowed to go
28 into any towns or villages along the way; many times this meant
29 traveling much farther to go around them; one family in
30 Golconda had compassion on them, however, and shared their
31 pumpkin crop with the Cherokee; and

32 WHEREAS, While staying near Golconda, several Cherokee

1 were murdered by locals; the killers filed a lawsuit against
2 the U.S. Government through the courthouse in Vienna, suing the
3 government for \$35 a head to bury the murdered Cherokee; they
4 lost their suit and the bodies were thrown in shallow, unmarked
5 graves near Brownfield where a monument to the Trail of Tears
6 now stands; and

7 WHEREAS, The Cherokee marched on through Southern
8 Illinois; their trail, which follows the course of what is now
9 Illinois Route 146, is marked by crude camps from Golconda
10 through Dixon Springs, Wartrace, Vienna, Mt. Pleasant, and
11 Jonesboro to the Dutch Creek Crossing; about December 15, 1838,
12 they were forced to spend the winter in the area of what is now
13 the Trail of Tears State Forest; floating ice on the
14 Mississippi River made it impossible to cross; many died there
15 during the long, cold winter; Some were sold into slavery and a
16 few escaped; and

17 WHEREAS, Those who escaped the march hid in the hills; some
18 eventually returned to their land in the Smoky Mountains and
19 their descendents live to this day in and around Cherokee,
20 North Carolina; annually they re-enact the tragic events of
21 that winter and their forced march in a play called "Unto These
22 Hills"; at least 4,000 Cherokee Indians died that winter along
23 with the pride of a nation that may never be restored; and

24 WHEREAS, Illinois Route 146 has not previously been
25 officially designated by the State of Illinois as a historic
26 route of the Trail of Tears; therefore, be it

27 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
28 NINETY-FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE
29 SENATE CONCURRING HEREIN, that Illinois Route 146 is officially
30 designated a historic highway and a route of the Trail of
31 Tears; and be it further

1 RESOLVED, That the Illinois Department of Transportation
2 is requested to erect at suitable locations, consistent with
3 State regulations, appropriate plaques or signs giving notice
4 of the designation; and be it further

5 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
6 presented to the Secretary of the Illinois Department of
7 Transportation and to Dr. K. Andrew West, president of the
8 Trail of Tears Association, Illinois Chapter.