



HR0517

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, For almost a century, beginning in 1673 when Louis
3 Joliet and Jacques Marquette explored the Mississippi River,
4 France claimed the Illinois Country; and

5 WHEREAS, In 1718 the French reorganized the administration
6 of their American possessions and removed the Illinois Country
7 from Canadian jurisdiction and made it part of Louisiana; and

8 WHEREAS, In December of 1718 a contingent of soldiers,
9 officials, and workmen were sent to establish a civil
10 government in the region; a wooden fort was constructed
11 eighteen miles north of the village of Kaskaskia from which the
12 civil authority would operate and whose military presence it
13 was hoped would mollify the Fox Tribe; and

14 WHEREAS, The stockade, named Fort de Chartres in honor of
15 Louis duc de Chartres, son of the regent of France, quickly
16 deteriorated due to frequent flooding; work on a larger fort,
17 located farther inland, began around 1725; and

18 WHEREAS, During the 1730s the French leaders began
19 discussing building a stone fort to protect their interests in
20 the region; profitable lead deposits had been found on the west
21 bank of the Mississippi near Ste. Genevieve and the rich bottom

1 lands yielded substantial crops which fed New Orleans, St.
2 Louis, and the rest of the territory; and

3 WHEREAS, In 1747, with the second fort in considerable
4 disrepair, the garrison relocated to nearby Kaskaskia; and

5 WHEREAS, Construction of the new fort began in the 1750s;
6 the fort was operational by 1754, and additions and
7 improvements continued until 1760; and

8 WHEREAS, The continued erosion caused by the Mississippi
9 River eventually caused the fort to be abandoned in 1771; and
10 only a year later the south wall and bastions collapsed into
11 the River; and

12 WHEREAS, Continued flooding, erosion and decay caused the
13 fort to slowly disappear, and by 1900 the only remnant of the
14 fort that existed above ground was the powder magazine,
15 considered by many historians to be the oldest building in
16 Illinois; and

17 WHEREAS, The site was declared a National Historic Landmark
18 in 1960 and was added to the National Register of Historic
19 Places in 1976; and

20 WHEREAS, There exists in the area surrounding Fort de

1 Chartres in southern Illinois, the historic resources of three
2 French forts, a French colonial village (St. Anne), two known
3 historic Indian occupational sites (Michigamea), a Jesuit
4 plantation with 2 windmills, a British trading post, the first
5 paved road in the Midwestern United States, the location of the
6 first mining operations (St. Philippe), the 10,000 year old
7 Modoc Rock Shelter, the quarry site for the limestone used to
8 construct the third Fort de Chartres, the first established
9 French Indian reservation (1721), and the colonial village of
10 Prairie du Rocher (1722); therefore, be it

11 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
12 NINETY-FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we
13 declare our support for the creation of a historical center
14 dedicated to the interpretation and understanding of French
15 colonial life in the United States, to be sited at Fort de
16 Chartres State Park, in Illinois.