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SENATE RESOLUTION

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

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

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

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

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

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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 near East St. Louis, the quarry site for the
8 limestone used to construct the third Fort de Chartres, the
9 first established French Indian reservation (1721), and the
10 colonial village of Prairie du Rocher (1722); therefore, be it

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