

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 112

BY SENATOR MORRISH

A RESOLUTION

To designate May 6, 2014, as "Battle of Calcasieu Pass Day" in the Louisiana Senate.

WHEREAS, May 6, 2014, is the sesquicentennial of the Civil War battle of Calcasieu Pass in Southwestern Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, this battle was a skirmish fought on May 6, 1864, near the mouth of the Calcasieu River in Southwestern Louisiana which resulted in a victory by the Confederate States of America; and

WHEREAS, though involving no more than five hundred soldiers and sailors and taking place in a remote area of the Confederacy, this battle was a significant part of the successful effort by Confederate coastal defense troops to defend the western coast of the Gulf of Mexico from Union forces; and

WHEREAS, along the western coast of the Gulf of Mexico, the continuing Confederate effort to deny the Union access to the lands bordering the western Gulf of Mexico was successful in tying up thousands of Union troops and in denying sporadic attempts at invasion from the sea; and

WHEREAS, upon orders from their commanders, in April 1864, the *U.S.S. Granite City* and the *U.S.S. Wave* bombed the Confederate fort at the mouth of the Calcasieu River and traveled about two miles up river to the pass, where they disembarked several Union infantrymen to round up livestock from surrounding farms, believing farmers in the area to be Union sympathizers; and

WHEREAS, the *Wave* and the *Granite City* traveled to Calcasieu Pass, located in an area where the bend in the river formed a peninsula on the land; and

WHEREAS, the Union soldiers sought to secure the areas adjacent to the pass where their ships were anchored by destroying the bridges over Mud and Oyster bayous and posting guards around their perimeter; and

WHEREAS, the Confederate garrison forty miles west at Sabine Pass was apprised

of the situation in Louisiana and assembled a force to expel the Union ships and their infantrymen from Confederate soil; and

WHEREAS, on the afternoon of May 4, 1864, the Confederate foot soldiers began their trek from Texas to Calcasieu Pass, arriving along the Calcasieu River area in the early morning hours of May 6; and

WHEREAS, in order to support the infantry, artillery was ferried from Fort Manhasset across Sabine Lake, into Johnson Bayou in Louisiana, and eventually to within firing range of the Union gunboats in the Calcasieu River; and

WHEREAS, as the day dawned on May 6, the Confederate forces completely surprised the Union troops, their guards having abandoned their posts in the face of Confederate activity in the area, beginning an artillery bombardment and shelling the ships in the river; and

WHEREAS, the Union naval forces returned fire and the Confederate artillery was caught in deadly crossfire between the ships and heavy fire on the artillery resulted in a direct hit on one cannon, demolishing the cannon and injuring the three artillerymen; and

WHEREAS, a quick-thinking Confederate lieutenant moved the remaining cannon closer to the river, thus avoiding any more damage from the crossfire; and

WHEREAS, withering fire demolished the *Granite City's* wheel house and sixteen Confederate shells penetrated her hull near the waterline, causing her lieutenant to hoist a white flag over the ship and to lower a boat to take on the victors; and

WHEREAS, with the surrender of the *Granite City*, the Confederate soldiers turned all their artillery on the *Wave* while her sailors hastened to gather enough steam to escape down river; and

WHEREAS, the Confederate shells crashed through the *Wave's* pilot house, engine room, and boilers, followed by a direct hit on the gunboat's 32-pound cannon, ending the gunboat's ability to return fire, and resulting in the raising of a white flag of surrender on the mast of the Union boat; and

WHEREAS, the Union infantry who were camped on shore, surrendered without firing a shot in defense of their positions and became somewhat willing prisoners of the Confederate troops; and

WHEREAS, the Confederate forces gathered the Union prisoners and took control of the gunboats; and

WHEREAS, Confederate casualties totaled fourteen dead and, at least eleven wounded and Union casualties totaled six sailors and, at least twenty-one injured; and

WHEREAS, the total number of Union dead was difficult to determine as Union sailors were believed to have weighted down some bodies and thrown them in the river; and

WHEREAS, the Confederates took command of the two gunboats, also a total of one hundred seventy-four prisoners, sixteen cannons, the stolen livestock; and

WHEREAS, once the soldiers, prisoners, and the two gunboats returned to the Confederate Fort Manhasset across the Sabine River, the gunboats were converted to blockade runners and prowled the waters of the western Gulf of Mexico until the end of the war in April 1865.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby designate May 6, 2014, as "Battle of Calcasieu Pass Day" in the Louisiana Senate.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE