

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2001

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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 1469
Rules and Operations of the Senate Committee Substitute Adopted 7/24/02

Sponsors:

Referred to:

July 1, 2002

1 A JOINT RESOLUTION HONORING THE LIFE AND MEMORY OF WILLIAM
2 JOSEPH GASTON ON THE 225TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BIRTH.

3 Whereas, William Joseph Gaston was born on September 19, 1778, in New
4 Bern, North Carolina; and

5 Whereas, William Joseph Gaston's father, Dr. Alexander Gaston, a patriot
6 during the American Revolution, was killed by Tories in August 1781 when William
7 Joseph Gaston was a young boy; and

8 Whereas, William Joseph Gaston was reared by his mother, Margaret Sharpe
9 Gaston, to adhere to the beliefs and principles of the Roman Catholic church; and

10 Whereas, William Joseph Gaston began his formal education as the first
11 student at Georgetown College in 1791; and

12 Whereas, William Joseph Gaston later graduated from the College of New
13 Jersey at Princeton; and

14 Whereas, William Joseph Gaston, after graduating from college, returned to
15 New Bern, North Carolina, to study law under a well-known lawyer, Francois-Xavier
16 Martin; and

17 Whereas, William Joseph Gaston was admitted to the North Carolina State
18 Bar in 1798 and later developed an expertise in property and criminal law; and

19 Whereas, William Joseph Gaston became very active in the political affairs of
20 the State and nation; and

21 Whereas, William Joseph Gaston served the people of Craven County in the
22 State Senate during the Assemblies of 1800, 1812, 1818, and 1819; and

23 Whereas, in the 1818 Assembly of the Senate, William Joseph Gaston served
24 as chair of the joint legislative committee that proposed the creation of the North
25 Carolina Supreme Court; and

26 Whereas, William Joseph Gaston represented the Town of New Bern in the
27 North Carolina House of Commons in 1807, 1808, 1809, 1828, and 1829, and served
28 partial terms in 1827 and 1831; and

1 Whereas, during the 1808 Assembly of the North Carolina House of
2 Commons, William Joseph Gaston was elected Speaker and served as a presidential
3 elector; and

4 Whereas, William Joseph Gaston served in the United States House of
5 Representatives from 1815 to 1817; and

6 Whereas, in 1833, William Joseph Gaston, a devout Catholic, was elected to
7 the North Carolina Supreme Court, notwithstanding Article 32 of the North Carolina
8 Constitution, which denied anyone from holding a State office who did not believe in
9 "the Truth of the Protestant Religion"; and

10 Whereas, in 1835, William Joseph Gaston purchased a library for the State
11 Supreme Court while on a trip to New York City to enable the justices to render better
12 decisions; and

13 Whereas, William Joseph Gaston served as a delegate to the North Carolina
14 Constitutional Convention of 1835, where he spoke out in favor of continued suffrage
15 for free blacks, federal representation as the basis for representation in the North
16 Carolina House of Commons, and biennial meetings of the State legislature; and

17 Whereas, William Joseph Gaston, during the 1835 Convention, also spoke
18 against the religious test for office contained in the North Carolina Constitution at that
19 time, which later resulted in the removal of the word "Protestant" and the substitution of
20 the word "Christian" throughout the constitution; and

21 Whereas, William Joseph Gaston was well respected and admired by all who
22 knew him; and

23 Whereas, William Joseph Gaston was awarded numerous honorary degrees
24 and memberships from colleges, universities, and organizations throughout the nation;
25 and

26 Whereas, William Joseph Gaston served as a trustee of the University of
27 North Carolina at Chapel Hill from 1802 until his death; and

28 Whereas, William Joseph Gaston donated money for the construction of St.
29 Paul's Church in New Bern, the oldest Roman Catholic church building in North
30 Carolina; and

31 Whereas, William Joseph Gaston wrote the words for North Carolina's
32 official State song, "The Old North State", which he adapted from a melody sung by a
33 group of Swiss bell ringers who visited the capital; and

34 Whereas, Gaston County and the City of Gastonia are both named for
35 William Joseph Gaston; and

36 Whereas, William Joseph Gaston died on January 23, 1844; and

37 Whereas, as the 225th anniversary of the birth of William Joseph Gaston
38 nears, the General Assembly celebrates his life and memory and his many contributions
39 to our State and recognizes his stand on religious tolerance; Now, therefore,
40 Be it resolved by the Senate, the House of Representatives concurring:

41 **SECTION 1.** The General Assembly honors the memory of William Joseph
42 Gaston for the service he rendered the State and nation.

1 **SECTION 2.** The Secretary of State shall transmit a certified copy of this
2 resolution to the Cities of Gastonia and New Bern and to the Counties of Gaston and
3 Craven.

4 **SECTION 3.** This resolution is effective upon ratification.