

ONE HUNDRED SECOND LEGISLATURE

SECOND SESSION

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION 362

Introduced by Avery, 28; Flood, 19.

WHEREAS, Nebraska law designates January 5 of each year as George W. Norris Day and provides that such day shall be set apart for holding suitable exercises in the schools of the state in recognition of the many great benefits bestowed upon the people of the State of Nebraska and the United States as a whole due in large part to the influence of George W. Norris. Such benefits include: (1) Establishment of a nonpartisan unicameral legislative body for the State of Nebraska; (2) establishment of the Tennessee Valley Authority; (3) the development of electricity in the rural areas of the nation; (4) passage of the twentieth amendment to the United States Constitution, commonly known as the lame duck amendment; and (5) the Norris-La Guardia Act which outlawed yellow-dog contracts and was a great boon to working men and women across the nation; and

WHEREAS, Nebraska law directs the Governor of the State of Nebraska to issue a proclamation calling upon the officials of state government and subdivisions thereof to display the flags of the United States and Nebraska on all public buildings on January 5 of each year and inviting the people of the State of Nebraska to observe the day in schools and other suitable places with appropriate ceremonies in commemoration of the life's work and contributions of George W. Norris; and

WHEREAS, George William Norris was born on July 11, 1861, in Sandusky, Ohio, and died on September 2, 1944, in McCook, Nebraska; and

WHEREAS, George William Norris served Nebraska for five terms in the United States House of Representatives from 1903 until 1913, and five terms in the United States Senate from 1913 until 1943; and

WHEREAS, George William Norris led the effort to create two federal programs that have had far-reaching effects on America's rural population; and

WHEREAS, George William Norris sponsored and the United States Senate passed the Tennessee Valley Authority Act of 1933, culminating a twelve-year effort to build dams on the Tennessee River and its tributaries to control flooding and to generate low-cost electricity; and

WHEREAS, George William Norris also sponsored the Rural Electrification Act, which brought electricity to rural areas throughout the country ensuring that power generation and delivery systems would be owned by the public for the common good; and

WHEREAS, George William Norris said in a 1943 speech entitled The Model Legislature: "To get good government and to retain it, it is necessary that a liberty-loving, educated, intelligent people should be ever watchful, to carefully guard and protect their rights and liberties"; and

WHEREAS, George William Norris promoted the concept of the nonpartisan, one-house legislature, the "Nebraska Experiment," in the belief that a one-house system would curb the abuse of conference committees and promote transparency in government proceedings; and

WHEREAS, Nebraska voters endorsed the one-house system, and in 1937, Nebraska became the first and only state to have a unicameral

legislature, and Nebraska continues to be the only state to retain a unicameral legislature; and

WHEREAS, on January 5, 1937, Senator George William Norris missed the opening of the United States Congress in order to give the first members of the Unicameral an inspirational address on the opportunity they had to expand the horizons of representative government through the innovative device of unicameralism; and

WHEREAS, on February 16, 1984, the Legislature officially recognized George William Norris' contributions and the fiftieth anniversary of the Unicameral by memorializing the legislative chamber as "The George W. Norris Legislative Chamber" in honor of the contributions of the late Senator; and

WHEREAS, Thursday, January 5, 2012, shall be the celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Nebraska Unicameral Legislature.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA, SECOND SESSION:

1. That the Legislature honors the lifetime achievements of George William Norris.

2. That a copy of this resolution be sent to the Nebraska State Historical Society's Senator George Norris State Historic Site.