SPONSOR: Sen. Paradee & Rep. Lynn

DELAWARE STATE SENATE
153rd GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 135

PAYING TRIBUTE TO THE OUTSTANDING EFFORTS OF TOM WELCH OVER THE PAST TWO DECADES TO PRESERVE THE HISTORY OF DELAWARE REVOLUTIONARY WAR HERO ALLEN MCLANE AND OTHER HISTORICAL FIGURES.

WHEREAS, having retired from a career as a civics teacher, a counselor, and administrator at area educational institutions in the Dover area and years as a financial adviser, Tennessee native Thomas Welch embarked on a new career focusing on his passion for history; and

WHEREAS, Tom was hired by the Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs to be an historical interpreter in the Division's museums, an assignment that soon centered on Dover's Old State House on The Green; and

WHEREAS, a year thereafter, Tom and other HCA staffers were assigned to collaborate with the First State Heritage Park on staging a play, "Fully, Freely, and Entirely," to tell the story of the ratification of the United States Constitution, which occurred on December 7, 1787, henceforth known as "Delaware Day," in Dover's Golden Fleece Tavern on The Green; and

WHEREAS, Tom, who was assigned to portray 1 of the 30 Delaware signers, selected at random the character of Allen McLane, an 18th century resident of Smyrna and Delaware Revolutionary War hero, with whom he was then unfamiliar; and

WHEREAS, beginning the process of researching McLane online, the first source he found was entitled "Allen McLane—Unknown Hero of the Revolution," and was a dramatic retelling of McLane's many exciting exploits during the Revolution, often reporting directly to the Continental Army commander, General George Washington; and

WHEREAS, the 5 act play was presented on Delaware Day, 2008, and included a 10 minute conversation between McLane and Delaware statesman Gunning Bedford, Jr. discussing how the U.S. Congress would be formed; and

WHEREAS, in the months that followed, Tom developed a master plan to tell the remarkable story of McLane's life, and discovered a portrait of McLane by artist Charles Willson Peale in a state museum warehouse which he was then able to arrange, with the help of HCA curator Ann Baker Horsey and then-Senator Bruce C. Ennis, to hang in the first-floor hallway of Legislative Hall where it has remained ever since; and

WHEREAS, in June 2011, through the efforts of then-Senators Ennis and Brian Bushweller, the Delaware General Assembly passed on June 30, 2011 a Senate Joint Resolution calling on the citizens of Delaware to find ways to honor this

Revolutionary War hero, which was signed by then-Governor Jack Markell in the Old State House on August 11, 2011 in the presence of a standing-room-only audience; and

WHEREAS, the following year the State of Delaware and the Town of Smyrna renamed the Lake Como Bridge the "Major McLane Bridge"; and

WHEREAS, thereafter, in 2014, the Delaware Heritage Press published "Allen McLane—Patriot, Soldier, Spy, Port Collector," which was edited by Mr. Welch; and

WHEREAS, on October 25, 2014, the Allen McLane Public Symposium was held at Wesley College, attended by 114 persons; and

WHEREAS, also in 2014, the Delaware Division of Libraries initiated the Allen McLane LibGuide, a website maintained by the division and by Mr. Welch, for the purpose of introducing members of the public to this outstanding Delaware hero; and

WHEREAS, at around the same time Mr. Welch initiated the monthly Allen McLane Newsletter to highlight area historical and cultural events and to share specific aspects of the life and contributions of McLane, with a readership that now stands at 1,200 persons; and

WHEREAS, over the past 15 years, Mr. Welch has spoken over 150 times to a wide variety of organizations and to more than 6,000 persons telling the story of Allen McLane, in most instances appropriately attired as McLane in 18th century garb; and

WHEREAS, now, after a remarkable body of work spanning almost 2 decades, Tom is preparing to retire once and for all, though he does so having taken steps to ensure that the story of the remarkable life of this great Delawarean is preserved for future generations.

NOW, THEREFORE:

BE IT RESOLVED that the members of the Senate of the 153rd General Assembly of the State of Delaware, the House of Representatives concurring therein, do hereby extend to Mr. Thomas Welch heartfelt thanks and best wishes for all that he has done over many years to share the life story and to preserve the memory of the outstanding Delaware Revolutionary War hero Allen McLane.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a suitable copy of this resolution be presented to Mr. Welch upon its passage.

SYNOPSIS

This Senate Concurrent Resolution honors and commends Mr. Thomas Welch for his nearly two decades of work in preserving the remarkable life story of Delaware Revolutionary War hero Allen McLane, a resident of the town of Smyrna.

Author: Senator Paradee