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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

HOUSE RESOLUTION

CONGRATULATING THE TOWN OF LITTLE COMPTON ON THE JOYOUS OCCASION
OF ITS 350TH ANNIVERSARY DURING 2025

Introduced By: Representatives McGaw, Shekarchi, Blazejewski, Chippendale,
Edwards, DeSimone, Craven, Ajello, Shallcross Smith, and Fogarty
Date Introduced: May 15, 2025

Referred To: House read and passed

1 WHEREAS, Little Compton, a Rhode Island coastal town, was the traditional homeland
2 of the Sakonnet, Wampanoag people, who have lived in Sakonnet (Little Compton) since the end
3 of the last ice age approximately 12,000 years ago. The Sakonnets lived as part of a community
4 of 69 Wampanoag villages in what would later become Massachusetts and eastern Rhode Island;
5 and

6 WHEREAS, The Sakonnets began to encounter European explorers and fishermen in the
7 16th century. When the Pilgrims arrived in 1620, they considered Sakonnet to be the southwest
8 corner of the Plymouth Colony. As more English settlers arrived and desired land, land was
9 sought in Sakonnet and often attained through coercive sales. After a period of tumultuous events,
10 including King Philip's War fought in Sakonnet in 1675-1676, a number of English people from
11 the Plymouth area, and their families, began to settle in Sakonnet. Many were blacksmiths,
12 coopers, surveyors, and farmers, and they began to build the infrastructure to create a Town. Each
13 was given a free ten-acre house lot to settle in Sakonnet, and soon many other English families
14 arrived; and

15 WHEREAS, In 1682, the English Settlers renamed Sakonnet as Little Compton and
16 thanks to a new boundary that had been ordered by King George II in 1747, made most of Little
17 Compton part of the Rhode Island Colony. Tragically, slave labor was a part of the early Little
18 Compton economy; and

19 WHEREAS, Farming was the primary economic engine in Little Compton for more than

1 1,000 years, from the native foods of the Sakonnet people, the textiles of the first English settlers,
2 the meat and vegetables delivered to nearby cities and communities as well as the Caribbean, to
3 later include the Rhode Island Red Hen, and the Little Compton Goose, to dairy farms throughout
4 much of the 20th century and most recently, specialty farms. Merchants also found great success
5 in Little Compton; and

6 WHEREAS, City dwellers first started to arrive in Little Compton in the early 19th
7 century, tempted by the great fishing and hunting opportunities available to them. Originally, it
8 was sportsmen who were mostly arriving, but soon enough their families started to join them,
9 staying at local farms. Little Compton's next industry, summer tourism, was soon born and
10 continues to this day; and

11 WHEREAS, In the latter quarter of the 19th century, Azorean immigrants began to arrive
12 in Little Compton in large numbers. They filled the void for laborers left by the end of slavery
13 and indentured servitude. Soon, the Azorean community began to buy many farms and continued
14 the great farming tradition that had always been a part of the Little Compton's culture; and

15 WHEREAS, The 20th Century presented the Little Compton community with great
16 challenges and great successes. The Little Compton community pulled together to face the
17 influenza outbreak in 1918, and the 1938 hurricane, both of which took many lives. World War II
18 had a big impact on Little Compton and its landscape, with the building of a major Army fort at
19 Sakonnet Point named Fort Church; and

20 WHEREAS, After World War II, with cars becoming commonplace and new roads and
21 bridges being built, it became easier for young men and women to seek new work and
22 educational opportunities and living space beyond the urban core of Rhode Island and beyond. By
23 the 1960s, Little Compton became a bedroom community in addition to a farming and summer
24 community, and the town welcomed the new middle-class families that arrived, with most of their
25 children attending the Town's only school, Josephine F. Wilbur; and

26 WHEREAS, In the latter part of the 20th century, the residents of Little Compton began
27 to push back against over-development. In response, Little Compton supported one of the first
28 land preservation movements in the nation, successfully preserving hundreds of acres of natural
29 habitat and agricultural land, thereby protecting the historic landscape of the town; and

30 WHEREAS, In the 21st century, the Internet has connected the people of Little Compton
31 with the rest of the nation and world, allowing residents the ability to work remotely, advertise
32 their rentals globally, and to once again have products delivered to people right in their homes.
33 The residents of Little Compton came together in unison to fight its greatest challenge of the new
34 century, the recent COVID-19 outbreak, where the town became a safe haven for both local

1 families and newcomers seeking the safety of open spaces. Little Compton farmers worked
2 tirelessly to ensure that there was a steady, locally-sourced, supply of nutritious food; and

3 WHEREAS, As Little Compton and its residents approach their 350th anniversary, the
4 town celebrates its natural beauty, its well-preserved history and landscape, and the strength of its
5 community ties; now, therefore be it

6 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island hereby
7 joyously celebrates the 350th anniversary of Little Compton during 2025; and be it further

8 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
9 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to the Little Compton Historical Society.

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