

2013 -- H 6085

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2013

H O U S E R E S O L U T I O N

**REITERATING SUPPORT FOR THE CONCEPT OF BRINGING THE RETIRED AIRCRAFT
CARRIER USS JOHN F. KENNEDY TO NEWPORT COUNTY AS A FAMILY
ATTRACTION, EDUCATION AND JOB TRAINING CENTER, DISASTER RELIEF
FACILITY, MUSEUM, AND
MEMORIAL**

Introduced By: Representatives Finn, Ruggiero, Abney, Canario, and Edwards

Date Introduced: May 07, 2013

Referred To: House read and passed

1 WHEREAS, Rhode Island Aviation Hall of Fame, Inc. (RIAHOF), a Rhode Island
2 nonprofit organization, plans to develop a world-class, financially self-sufficient family
3 attraction, education and job training center, museum, and memorial on the Aquidneck Island
4 (Newport) side of Rhode Island's beautiful Narragansett Bay, featuring the retired aircraft carrier
5 USS John F. Kennedy as the centerpiece; and

6 WHEREAS, Locating this namesake legacy in Rhode Island would be most appropriate
7 given President Kennedy's close association with this state, including his wartime training at
8 Melville, his marriage in Newport, and the Summer White House years at Hammersmith Farm;
9 and

10 WHEREAS, This project has the potential to become a self-sufficient economic engine,
11 all at no cost to or investment by the state. Here are some specific benefits:

- 12 • Attract as many as 350,000 visitors annually, many of whom would not otherwise come
13 to the state;
- 14 • Generate more than \$45 million in annual economic impact;
- 15 • Create more than 80 direct jobs and more than 500 total jobs;
- 16 • Provide a major vocational training facility and school-to-career program;
- 17 • Contribute more than \$3 million annually in direct tax revenues to the embattled state
18 treasury;

- 1 • Result in a worldwide public relations boost for Rhode Island;
- 2 • Offer public access to and use of another part of the bay waterfront;
- 3 • Provide significant educational, vocational, cultural, and historic benefits; and

4 WHEREAS, A carefully developed business plan focusing on the diversification of
5 revenue streams to insulate against the seasonality of Rhode Island tourism has been vetted by
6 one of the top consultants in the nation. ConsultEcon, Inc. has completed a detailed market
7 demand, financial feasibility, and economic impact study that concludes this project will be
8 financially viable if the plan is executed as presented; and

9 WHEREAS, The project intends to become a major educational resource for the state and
10 the region, focusing on S.T.E.M. education offering math and science opportunities for grades K-
11 12. The project will provide opportunities for more than 2.7 million students under 16 within a
12 100 mile radius--and that market is growing faster than the national average. The project will
13 commit significant resources to help future generations better understand history, math, and
14 physical sciences; and

15 WHEREAS, The USS John F. Kennedy project will become a resource for business
16 development through school-to-work initiatives to be run in conjunction with area industry,
17 colleges, and technical schools. The job training benefit that can be obtained through this creative
18 reuse of a taxpayer asset is enormous. More importantly, that benefit can be obtained at a fraction
19 of the cost of other options. The equipment in the machine shops and other repair facilities aboard
20 this ship offer vocational training capabilities in the marine trades and other technical disciplines
21 that are not only worth millions of dollars, but also equal or exceed what is available anywhere
22 else in the region; and

23 WHEREAS, The USS JFK would become a life-saving resource in case of disaster,
24 providing shelter, emergency power, communications, and virtually unlimited water and food
25 supplies. The USS JFK can serve as an emergency management facility with more than 370,000
26 cubic feet of storage space, a communications center, fully-equipped hospital, a helicopter storage
27 and launch capability, and facilities to feed and house as many as 5,000 persons in a crisis; and

28 WHEREAS, RIAHOF's application to the U.S. Navy has already included letters of
29 support from the Governor, former Congressman Patrick Kennedy, and other members of the
30 Rhode Island delegation, the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation, the Department
31 of Health and Human Services, the Department of Labor and Training, and the RI Adjutant
32 General, among others. This project is supported by a wide range of ideological and political
33 interests, to include elected officials, labor unions, educators, environmentalists, and business
34 groups; and

1 WHEREAS, The group and the region that would be most strongly affected by this
2 project, the Newport and Bristol County Convention & Visitors Bureau, is fully supportive of
3 this initiative. Executive Director and CEO Evan Smith wrote, "On behalf of the board of
4 directors and staff of the Newport & Bristol County Convention & Visitors Bureau we are
5 pleased to offer our support for your efforts to bring the aircraft carrier USS John Kennedy to
6 Aquidneck Island. As the official tourism marketing organization for Newport and Bristol County
7 we are very excited about the possibility of adding a significant new visitor attraction to the
8 waters of Narragansett Bay to compliment other area attractions and strengthen our overall
9 tourism program"; and

10 WHEREAS, The project is not inconsistent with other ongoing and planned development
11 on Aquidneck Island; and

12 WHEREAS, The United States Navy has designated RIAHOF as the "sole viable
13 candidate for the potential donation of the USS John F. Kennedy"; and

14 WHEREAS, The Office of the Secretary of the Navy has described the USS JFK
15 endeavor as "a very ambitious and exciting vision," and the Assistant Secretary of the Navy
16 responsible for Navy facilities worldwide has confirmed that the Navy would consider such an
17 arrangement so long as the mission of the base is not adversely affected; and

18 WHEREAS, All the various RIHOF efforts to achieve this end are being taken with the
19 United States Navy's knowledge, both locally and in Washington, D.C.; now, therefore be it

20 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island and
21 Providence Plantations believes it would be in the state's best interest to continue to endorse and
22 nurture a project that promises so many benefits to its citizens, is supported by the local region,
23 and is compatible with responsible development of Narragansett Bay; and be it further

24 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives also strongly supports the national
25 fund-raising effort now underway for the USS JFK project, and also encourages the continuation
26 of corporate and other private financial support to this nonprofit initiative; and be it further

27 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives urges all interested parties, including,
28 but not limited to, the Governor, the Economic Development Corporation, various city and town
29 governing bodies, chambers of commerce, tourism development entities, the business community,
30 and the residents of this state, to come together in a cooperative effort to overcome all
31 bureaucratic and technical obstacles and raise the funding necessary to move forward with this
32 worthwhile endeavor; and be it further

33 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
34 transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to the Governor, the Director of the Rhode Island

- 1 Economic Development Corporation, and to the executive officers of each of the cities and towns
- 2 in this state.

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