

By Senator Soto

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1 Senate Resolution

2 A resolution recognizing Juan Ponce de Leon and  
3 celebrating the quincentennial of his landing in  
4 Florida.

5  
6 WHEREAS, Juan Ponce de Leon was born into a noble family  
7 around 1474 in the village of Santervas de Campos in the  
8 province of Leon, Spain; became a page to the prince of Castile,  
9 who later became King Ferdinand of Castile; received education  
10 in fighting skills, manners, and religion while serving a knight  
11 named Pedro Nunez de Guzman; and later assisted in the 10-year  
12 conquest of the Muslim kingdom of Granada in southern Spain, and

13 WHEREAS, hearing stories of Christopher Columbus's  
14 discovery of a new world, Juan Ponce de Leon began his  
15 exploration after the war with the Moors and became a soldier in  
16 the colony on the island of Hispaniola, and

17 WHEREAS, Juan Ponce de Leon spent most of the early 1500s  
18 in Hispaniola, building farms, distributing land rights, helping  
19 construct buildings to aid defense, and working to set up an  
20 island economy that would include a system of production,  
21 distribution, and use of goods and services, and

22 WHEREAS, after helping defeat an Indian uprising in the  
23 eastern province of Hispaniola, Juan Ponce de Leon was named  
24 Deputy Governor of the island by Governor Nicolas de Ovando in  
25 1504, and he married and fathered four children during this  
26 time, and

27 WHEREAS, Juan Ponce de Leon led an expedition on Borinquen,  
28 a neighboring island to the east now known as Puerto Rico,  
29 taking 50 soldiers with him on a single ship, settling near what

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30 is now San Juan, where he discovered gold, and within a year  
31 conquered the island for Spain, and

32 WHEREAS, as a result of his gold discovery, Juan Ponce de  
33 Leon became one of the richest men in the New World, and King  
34 Ferdinand of Spain appointed him as the island's first governor,  
35 and

36 WHEREAS, Juan Ponce de Leon founded Puerto Rico's first  
37 European settlement, Caparra, and, a year later, returned to  
38 Hispaniola, having found much gold but running low on supplies,  
39 and

40 WHEREAS, Juan Ponce de Leon was instructed to return to the  
41 island of Puerto Rico and continue the settlement of the island  
42 and to increase his gold mining efforts, and he returned,  
43 bringing his wife and children along, and

44 WHEREAS, the Spanish Crown encouraged Juan Ponce de Leon to  
45 continue searching for new lands, in hopes of finding more gold  
46 and expanding the Spanish empire, but, due to political reasons,  
47 he was relieved of his governorship, and

48 WHEREAS, Juan Ponce de Leon immediately applied for a royal  
49 grant from the king to settle on an unknown island called  
50 Bimini, where it was rumored that miraculous waters could  
51 rejuvenate those who drank from them, and

52 WHEREAS, upon receiving permission on March 3, 1513, Juan  
53 Ponce de Leon left Puerto Rico with three ships and, by March  
54 27, saw the mainland of Florida, where he then landed on April  
55 2, and

56 WHEREAS, impressed with its many beautiful flowers, Juan  
57 Ponce de Leon renamed the area "La Florida" in honor of finding  
58 the area on Easter Sunday, called "Pascua Florida" in Spanish,

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59 and

60 WHEREAS, Juan Ponce de Leon continued to explore, sailing  
61 along Florida's east coast and discovering the Bahama Channel,  
62 which later became the route of the treasure ships on their  
63 return voyage to Spain, and sailed through the Florida Keys,  
64 which he dubbed "the Martyrs" ("Los Martires"), saying that the  
65 islands looked like suffering men from a distance, and

66 WHEREAS, Juan Ponce de Leon then sailed up the Gulf Coast  
67 to Pensacola Bay and along the southwest coast, coming to an  
68 island he named Tortugas, known today as the Dry Tortugas  
69 because of the nesting turtles found there, and

70 WHEREAS, on September 21, 1513, Juan Ponce de Leon returned  
71 to Puerto Rico and then to Spain, where he was knighted, given a  
72 personal coat of arms, and granted a royal patent to colonize  
73 the islands of Bimini and Florida, and

74 WHEREAS, in 1521, Juan Ponce de Leon returned to the west  
75 coast of Florida with 200 men and enough supplies to establish a  
76 colony as the king had ordered, but a fierce attack by Native  
77 Americans caused them to abandon the settlement, and

78 WHEREAS, Juan Ponce de Leon, wounded in the battle, died a  
79 few days later after returning to Cuba and was buried in Puerto  
80 Rico, and

81 WHEREAS, the words on his gravestone read, "Here rest the  
82 bones of a valiant lion, mightier in deeds than in name," NOW,  
83 THEREFORE,

84

85 Be It Resolved by the Senate of the State of Florida:

86

87 That we honor and recognize the 500th anniversary of Juan

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88 Ponce de Leon's historic journey, his discovery of our great  
89 state, his undeniable valor, and his service as the first  
90 governor of Puerto Rico.