

1 A RESOLUTION honoring Shawnee Chief Nonhelema Hokolessqua as part of
2 Women's History Month.

3 WHEREAS, Nonhelema Hokolessqua was a tall, powerful Shawnee woman born in
4 1718. She spent a portion of her life in Pennsylvania where she married. By 1750,
5 Nonhelema Hokolessqua was a village chief; and

6 WHEREAS, when Nonhelema Hokolessqua's first husband died in 1754, she
7 remarried and relocated to the Ohio and Kentucky area. Originally Shawnee and Eastern
8 Cherokee territory, Kentucky was overtaken by the Iroquois during the early years of the
9 French fur trade. As Iroquois power waned in the early 18th century, the Shawnee and
10 Cherokee reestablished their presence; and

11 WHEREAS, Nonhelema Hokolessqua became a wife, a chief, an overseer of
12 domestic productions, and a warrior. This was all made possible through the Shawnees'
13 view of the world as a system of balance. As in most other Native American cultures,
14 such balance among the Shawnees assured prosperity, and while not ensuring gendered
15 equality, it made gendered hierarchy difficult. Shawnee women exerted life-power as
16 producers of crops, clothes, domestic goods, and children; and

17 WHEREAS, this role as producers of crops gave women economic power. This
18 elevated Shawnee women's status compared to their white counterparts and some Eastern
19 tribes. Shawnee women could also serve alongside or as chiefs, both in war and peace.
20 Nonhelema Hokolessqua was one such chief, whose primary responsibilities are recounted
21 as domestic affairs, planting, harvesting, and organizing feasts; and

22 WHEREAS, Nonhelema Hokolessqua became a diplomat and war chief. Accounts
23 from white settlers of meeting with Shawnee detail how Shawnee welcomed women to
24 negotiation meetings, stating "some women were wiser than some men," as well as tales
25 of women in battle during the French and Indian War of the 1760s. Nonhelema
26 Hokolessqua became such a warrior, she was cited for her bravery for her role in the
27 Battle of Busy Run in 1763. Early settlers named the village she presided over in her

1 honor; and

2 WHEREAS, by the mid-1770s, Nonhelema Hokesqua returned to being a peace
3 chief, warning settlers of impending attacks. European men expected to interact with
4 other men, requiring Shawnee women to give up many traditional roles. A pattern found
5 among the Cherokees, Choctaws, and Creeks during that era. It is plausible that
6 Nonhelema Hokesqua's abandonment of the war chief role resulted from European
7 dismissal of her in a man's role; and

8 WHEREAS, eventually Nonhelema Hokesqua's town was abandoned and the
9 tribes migrated northwestward. As settlers continued to push, Nonhelema appealed to the
10 Continental Congress for a 2,000 acre grant in Ohio on which to settle, in compensation
11 for losses she incurred and her efforts to preserve peace. Rather than grant her request,
12 the response of the Congress was to send her one dress of clothes per year and one ration
13 of provisions each day for the remainder of her life; and

14 WHEREAS, a year later, an American army raided Nonhelema Hokesqua's
15 village, killing their leader and taking Nonhelema and her daughters captive. Shawnee
16 oral tradition says that they cut the then 73-year-old's fingers off her right hand; and

17 WHEREAS, the life of Nonhelema Hokesqua embodies the transition from
18 colonization to eradication. She was among the last to remember when women held
19 social, political, and economic power. She was among the last to act as chief in both war
20 and peace, to preside over her people, and negotiate or fight for their safety and right to
21 live; and

22 WHEREAS, the story of Nonhelema Hokesqua remains a testament to the
23 millions who came before colonizers ever set eyes upon the land that would become
24 Kentucky;

25 NOW, THEREFORE,

26 ***Be it resolved by the Senate of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of***
27 ***Kentucky:***

1 ➔Section 1. The Senate hereby honors Shawnee Chief Nonhelema Hokolessqua as
2 part of Women's History Month.

3 ➔Section 2. When the Senate adjourns this day, it does so in honor and memory
4 of Shawnee Chief Nonhelema Hokolessqua.

5 ➔Section 3. The Clerk of the Senate is directed to transmit a copy of this
6 Resolution to Senator Reginald Thomas for delivery.