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SENATE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, Bulgaria and the United States are strategic partners and allies, sharing ties of culture, tradition, and common interest; and

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WHEREAS, The year 2023 marks the 20th anniversary of the United States Senate's ratification of the Protocol for Accession of Bulgaria into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the 80th anniversary of the Bulgarian people's rescue of the Bulgarian Jews, the 120th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and Bulgaria, and the 145th anniversary of the liberation of Bulgaria; and

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WHEREAS, The first Bulgarian emigrants to Illinois arrived in the second half of the 19th century; and

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WHEREAS, Granite City hosts the oldest Bulgarian American community in the United States; and

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WHEREAS, The prominent Bulgarian American banker, Henry Krantzhev, served as the president of the Granite City Trust and Savings Bank and as the president of the Masonic Temple Association, receiving the title of Scoutmaster; and

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1 WHEREAS, The first Bulgarian emigrants to Chicago, who
2 began to arrive as early as the 1870s, were students sent by
3 American protestant missionaries for study in the United
4 States; and

5 WHEREAS, While most of these students returned to
6 Bulgaria, some remained and created a Bulgarian American
7 community in Illinois; and

8 WHEREAS, Bulgaria was admitted into and permitted to
9 display an exhibit at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in
10 Chicago, an event hailed by the Chicago Tribune as the first
11 diplomatic recognition accorded to Bulgaria as an independent
12 state; and

13 WHEREAS, Aleko Konstantinov, a famous Bulgarian writer,
14 recounted his journey to the World's Columbian Exposition in
15 Chicago in his book, To Chicago and Back, which became
16 instrumental in encouraging generations of Bulgarians to
17 emigrate to Chicago; and

18 WHEREAS, Tens of thousands of Bulgarians arrived in the
19 United States from the geographic region of Macedonia at the
20 beginning of the 20th century, pursuing freedom and fleeing
21 the devastation and horrors occasioned by regional unrest; and

1 WHEREAS, The first Bulgarian Mission with its own priest
2 was established in Madison in 1907; and

3 WHEREAS, Madison is home to Illinois' oldest Bulgarian
4 Orthodox Church, Holy Trinity, built by Macedonian Bulgarians
5 with the current church building existing since 1910; and

6 WHEREAS, The Granite City Bulgarian community published
7 the first Bulgarian newspaper in the United States, the Vox
8 Populi, or Voice of the People, from 1907 to 1950; other
9 Bulgarians newspapers, such as the New World (1908-1909),
10 Emigrant (1909), Freedom (1914-1917), Macedonian Tribune
11 (1927-present), and others, followed in its wake; and

12 WHEREAS, Stoyan Yurukov became the first Bulgarian pilot
13 to fly in the skies above Chicago in 1912, charting the course
14 for many other Bulgarian pilots who have lived and worked in
15 the Windy City; and

16 WHEREAS, Bulgarian emigrants from the region of Macedonia
17 founded the Macedonian Patriotic Organization in 1922; the
18 organization continues to work for human, civil, and economic
19 rights of all individuals, regardless of ethnicity, who hail
20 from the geographic region; and

21 WHEREAS, Assen Hristov Jordanoff, a Bulgarian American

1 engineer and pilot, emigrated to the United States after World
2 War I, becoming one of the fathers of civil aviation in the
3 United States; and

4 WHEREAS, The Macedonian Bulgarian Stoyan Christowe, a
5 journalist for the Chicago Daily News, wrote a book titled
6 This is My Country, a semi-autographical book about the
7 immigrants arriving in the United States from southeast Europe
8 at the beginning of the 20th century and a book found on the
9 bedside table of President Franklin D. Roosevelt at the time
10 of his death; and

11 WHEREAS, John V. Atansoff, a Bulgarian American, created
12 the first automatic electronic digital computer in 1939, an
13 invention for which he was presented the National Medal for
14 Science and Technology by President George H. W. Bush in 1990;
15 and

16 WHEREAS, In the Spring of 1943, the Bulgarian people
17 resisted Nazi pressure to deport Bulgarian Jews to Nazi
18 concentration camps and, in doing so, rescued approximately
19 50,000 Bulgarian Jews from the worst terrors of the Nazi
20 regime; and

21 WHEREAS, The Bulgarian people acknowledge with sadness,
22 grief, and regret the deportation and confinement of over

1 11,000 Jews from the Bulgarian administered Thracian and
2 Macedonian territories during the war; and

3 WHEREAS, With the conclusion of World War II, Bulgaria
4 fell victim to communism and was cut off from interaction and
5 intercourse with the free world by the Soviet government's
6 Iron Curtain, resulting in the expulsion and flight of some of
7 its most educated, knowledgeable, and prosperous citizens; and

8 WHEREAS, Illinois became a safe haven for many Bulgarian
9 political dissidents and refugees, fleeing from the repressive
10 terrors of communism; and

11 WHEREAS, Communism maintained its firm grip on Bulgaria,
12 holding the people captive, until the fall of the Berlin Wall
13 in 1989; and

14 WHEREAS, The fall of the Berlin Wall and the following
15 dissolution of the Soviet Union freed the Bulgarian people to
16 proclaim and institute a democratic and multiparty political
17 system; and

18 WHEREAS, Within 20 years of the fall of communism,
19 Bulgaria became a member of NATO and an integral part of the
20 European Union; and

1 WHEREAS, Bulgaria, as a member of NATO, is a strategic
2 partner to the United States and a key ally in eastern Europe,
3 contributing to the stability of the Balkan Peninsula and
4 Black Sea region; and

5 WHEREAS, Bulgaria and the United States entered into the
6 U.S.-Bulgarian Defense Cooperation Agreement in 2006,
7 providing the U.S. military access to specified Bulgarian
8 military facilities, including the Novo Selo Training Area;
9 and

10 WHEREAS, In 2020, the United States and Bulgaria signed a
11 10-year Roadmap for Defense Cooperation to foster increased
12 military cooperation and preparation; and

13 WHEREAS, The U.S. and Bulgarian militaries conduct
14 numerous military-to-military engagements, involving joint
15 training exercises and peer-to-peer engagements to enhance
16 interoperability and cooperation; and

17 WHEREAS, Bulgarian troops have stood alongside American
18 soldiers in places such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, and
19 Bosnia and Herzegovina; and

20 WHEREAS, In 1960, Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley
21 proclaimed March 3 (Bulgarian Liberation Day) as Bulgaria Day

1 in Chicago, instituting an annual Bulgarian flag-raising
2 ceremony at Daley Plaza in Chicago that continues until this
3 day; and

4 WHEREAS, The Chicago metropolitan area is today considered
5 the home of the largest Bulgarian diaspora; and

6 WHEREAS, The two Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Churches in
7 the Chicago metropolitan area, St. Sophia (established in
8 1938) and St. John of Rila (established in 1996), along with
9 the Bulgarian Evangelical Church (New Life), serve as social
10 and religious centers, maintaining Bulgarian culture and
11 traditions; and

12 WHEREAS, Illinois is home to 13 Bulgarian Sunday Schools
13 that perpetuate Bulgarian language, culture, and history in
14 our communities; and

15 WHEREAS, Bulgarian Americans have greatly enriched the
16 cultural, technological, and civic life of Illinois,
17 contributing through their cultural centers, schools,
18 churches, dance groups, businesses, and other civic
19 organizations to the social, cultural, civil, and economic
20 development of the State of Illinois; therefore, be it

21 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL

1 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we send our warmest
2 congratulations and best wishes to the people of the Republic
3 of Bulgaria as they celebrate the 145th anniversary of their
4 liberation on March 3, 2023; and be it further

5 RESOLVED, That we confirm the rich friendship that binds
6 our peoples together; and be it further

7 RESOLVED, That we declare March of 2023 as Bulgarian
8 American Heritage Month in the State of Illinois; and be it
9 further

10 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
11 delivered to the Consul General of the Republic of Bulgaria in
12 Chicago, President Joe Biden, and all members of the Illinois
13 Congressional Delegation.