

House Resolution 550

By: Representatives Gordon of the 162nd, Stephens of the 161st, Bryant of the 160th, Stephens of the 164th, Watson of the 163rd, and others

A RESOLUTION

1 Urging the City of Savannah to consider issuing bonds to support the development,
2 construction, and implementation of a cruise ship terminal facility in the Savannah Harbor;
3 and for other purposes.

4 WHEREAS, tourism is Savannah's major industry, with 6.33 million visitors last year who
5 spent \$1.9 billion and supported 22,000 jobs; and

6 WHEREAS, this industry could grow exponentially if the city were to capture a portion of
7 the nation's \$38 billion cruise ship industry; and

8 WHEREAS, 13.2 million passengers cruised in 2008, a five percent increase over 2007, and
9 demand continues to exceed the supply for cruise ship facilities; and

10 WHEREAS, 35 new cruise ships are scheduled to be delivered between 2009 and 2012, with
11 a total of 69,200 new births; and

12 WHEREAS, of the top four cruise destinations, the Caribbean, Alaska, the Bahamas, and
13 Bermuda, Savannah is positioned to serve all but Alaska, and a Savannah based cruise line
14 would serve 85 percent of the most appealing destinations; and

15 WHEREAS, the cruise industry has established 30 North American embarkation ports within
16 a driving distance for 75 percent of their cruise passengers; and

17 WHEREAS, the industry capacity utilization rate for 2008 was 104 percent, and despite the
18 economic downturn in 2009, the cruise industry continues to grow with 13.4 million guests
19 sailing last year and 14.3 million guests projected to sail by the end of this year; and

20 WHEREAS, embarkation ports in North America are becoming crowded, and Miami, Port
21 Everglades, and Port Canaveral are running out of land for expansion while existing facilities
22 are fully utilized; and

23 WHEREAS, the cruise industry has determined that 40 percent of leisure travelers in
24 America are interested in taking a cruise during the next two years, and that number rises to
25 46 percent among leisure travelers who are interested in visiting Georgia, which shows a
26 robust market that is destined to grow in the years ahead; and

27 WHEREAS, cruises still retain greatest appeal among older travelers, and this profile is
28 consistent with the profile of adults who are interested in visiting Savannah, particularly
29 since it is the nation's largest urban historic landmark district, showcasing azaleas, live oak
30 trees, cobblestone streets, and nationally renowned squares; and

31 WHEREAS, there is no embarkation port located geographically in Georgia and while
32 Jacksonville is Savannah's closest competitor to the South, it does not offer a nationally
33 recognized historic district, which is most appealing to passengers seeking day excursions;
34 and

35 WHEREAS, the Interstate 16 transportation corridor provides easy access to travelers,
36 particularly those from the metropolitan Atlanta and North Georgia areas desiring to embark
37 from a convenient cruise port location in Savannah, thus saving money and travel time and
38 avoiding expensive air fares; and

39 WHEREAS, preliminary estimates indicate that a home cruise ship port in Savannah could
40 create an industry of up to \$100 million a year, with a potential of hundreds of new
41 sustainable jobs and resulting in an economic development potential for Georgia of over
42 \$1 billion during the next decade; and

43 WHEREAS, making Savannah Georgia's cruise port could generate millions of dollars in
44 new state taxes, thus keeping these resources in Georgia versus other neighboring states.

45 NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that
46 the members of this body strongly support efforts to make Savannah the first cruise ship port
47 in Georgia.

48 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this body urge the City of Savannah to consider issuing
49 bonds in order to develop a cruise ship terminal in the Savannah Harbor that will provide
50 new jobs and enhance the overall economic development of Georgia.

51 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized
52 and directed to transmit an appropriate copy of this resolution to the mayor of Savannah.