

House Resolution 610

By: Representatives Williams of the 165th, Brooks of the 63rd, Abrams of the 84th, Smyre of the 132nd, Tinubu of the 60th, and others

A RESOLUTION

1 Recognizing the Harris Neck Land Trust as the legal entity pursuing the return of the 2,687
2 acres of land in McIntosh County from the federal government and supporting these efforts;
3 and for other purposes.

4 WHEREAS, in 1942, the land known as Harris Neck, located in the northeast corner of
5 McIntosh County, Georgia, was home to approximately 75 families and had been home to
6 these families since the land was legally bequeathed to them, via the last will and testament
7 of Margret Ann Harris, on September 2, 1865; and

8 WHEREAS, the land and waters in and around Harris Neck provided this community with
9 its essential livelihood, and the community had lived in harmony with its natural environment
10 from 1865 to 1942, with a completely sustainable and self-sufficient way of life; and

11 WHEREAS, the federal government took the 2,687 acres of land, that was the home and
12 livelihood of the community known as Harris Neck, from these 75 families in July of 1942,
13 under the auspices of eminent domain; and

14 WHEREAS, this particular implementation of eminent domain was highly illegal and
15 violated the Constitutional rights of all members of the community; and

16 WHEREAS, in 1942, the federal government promised that these 2,687 acres of Harris Neck
17 would be returned to the rightful owners, the 75 families, at the end of World War II; and

18 WHEREAS, certain officials and residents of McIntosh County conspired to gain control of
19 the land of Harris Neck from the federal government at the end of World War II, and in fact,
20 did so; and

21 WHEREAS, the contract between the Federal War Assets Administration and McIntosh
22 County, signed in 1947, stipulated that Harris Neck be used only as an airport for the county;
23 and

24 WHEREAS, the federal government took back the 2,687 acres from McIntosh County in
25 1961 for contract violation and then transferred ownership of the land to the Department of
26 Interior in 1962; and

27 WHEREAS, the Department of Interior established a National Wildlife Refuge on the 2,687
28 acres of Harris Neck which has been managed by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service
29 since that time; and

30 WHEREAS, the actions of the federal government in 1942 and after World War II took away
31 the livelihood of the community of Harris Neck, and the transfer of title to the Department
32 of Interior was improper, invalid, and illegal, since the original taking of Harris Neck was
33 illegal; and

34 WHEREAS, the federal government's giving of Harris Neck to McIntosh County destroyed
35 the community of Harris Neck and the entire way of life of the families that called Harris
36 Neck their home and led to great hardship and suffering for the people of this community;
37 and

38 WHEREAS, former members of the Harris Neck community have formed the Harris Neck
39 Land Trust, which represents the original families of Harris Neck and their descendants; and

40 WHEREAS, the Harris Neck Land Trust has agreed to protect the six existing ponds of
41 Harris Neck, all of which were created by United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and all
42 the migratory birds that use these ponds, in perpetuity, once the land is returned by the
43 federal government to the rightful owners; and

44 WHEREAS, once the land is returned by the federal government, the trust will protect the
45 lands and waters and natural habitats of Harris Neck in perpetuity, will use the land in
46 environmentally sensitive ways, and will restrict future sales and uses of the land; and

47 WHEREAS, the Harris Neck Land Trust is now representing the original families of Harris
48 Neck and their descendants with present and ongoing efforts to have a bill introduced in

49 Congress that will result in the return of the 2,687 acres of land of Harris Neck to its rightful
50 owners, the living former members of the Harris Neck community and their descendants; and

51 WHEREAS, the McIntosh County Board of County Commissioners acknowledged the
52 wrongdoing of county officials and residents in the 1940's, 1950's and 1960's with respect
53 to the Harris Neck community and unanimously passed a resolution recognizing the Harris
54 Neck Land Trust as the official entity pursuing the return of the 2,687 acres of Harris Neck
55 from the federal government and supporting the trust's present efforts to reclaim this land on
56 January 9, 2007; and

57 WHEREAS, it is fitting that the legislature of the State of Georgia recognizes the Harris
58 Neck Land Trust as the legal entity pursuing the return of the 2,687 acres of Harris Neck on
59 behalf of all the families of Harris Neck, and their descendants, and supports the efforts of
60 the trust.

61 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that
62 the members of this body recognize the Harris Neck Land Trust as the legal entity pursuing
63 the return of the 2,687 acres of Harris Neck and express their support of the trust's efforts to
64 return this land to its rightful owners.

65 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized
66 and directed to transmit an appropriate copy of this resolution to the Harris Neck Land Trust.