

## House Resolution 65EX

By: Representatives Burns of the 157<sup>th</sup>, Parrish of the 156<sup>th</sup>, and Tankersley of the 158<sup>th</sup>

## A RESOLUTION

1 Urging the United States General Services Administration not to close the federal building  
2 housing the United States District Court in Statesboro; and for other purposes.

3 WHEREAS, the members of this body have been informed that the United States General  
4 Services Administration is considering closing the federal building housing the United States  
5 District Court in Statesboro, Georgia; and

6 WHEREAS, the federal court facility in Statesboro provides a valuable service to those  
7 citizens living in the counties encompassed in its division, including Bulloch, Candler,  
8 Emanuel, Evans, Jenkins, Screven, Tattnall, and Toombs Counties; and

9 WHEREAS, Southeast Georgia is home to many state prisons, including Georgia State  
10 Prison at Reidsville, Wheeler Correctional Institute, Smith State Prison, Rogers State Prison,  
11 and Emanuel Women's Prison, with a new prison currently under construction in Jenkins  
12 County; and

13 WHEREAS, the Georgia State Prison at Reidsville holds over 1,250 of the state's most  
14 violent and hardened prisoners; and

15 WHEREAS, when the Statesboro court facility was constructed, extra security details were  
16 incorporated into its design to ensure that violent prisoners could be safely transported,  
17 secured, and detained for all criminal proceedings, including funds and input from the federal  
18 marshal's service, to ensure a safe environment; and

19 WHEREAS, the Statesboro court facility is the only courthouse in the Southern District of  
20 Georgia specially designed to accommodate the need for violent offenders to be physically  
21 present in federal court; and

22 WHEREAS, if the Statesboro court facility is closed, prisoners in the various prisons,  
23 including those in the Reidsville prison, will have to be transported longer distances to  
24 courthouses which do not have the special prisoner security features incorporated into the  
25 Statesboro courthouse, potentially posing a security risk for courthouse employees and others  
26 who must deal with violent prisoners in court; and

27 WHEREAS, the United States Supreme Court has recognized the right of citizens to serve  
28 as jurors in the seminal case of *Batson v. Kentucky*, 476 U.S. 79 (1986), and this right would  
29 be abridged and compromised if it is too onerous to travel to serve as jurors, given the fact  
30 that the Southern District of Georgia is a large geographic area; and

31 WHEREAS, the persons using the Statesboro court facility numbered 16,918 in 2008; 23,126  
32 in 2009; and 19,991 in 2010; and

33 WHEREAS, the Statesboro court facility has the highest usage of the courts in the Southern  
34 District that do not have a manned clerk's office as part of the facility; and

35 WHEREAS, the number of individuals using the Statesboro court facility is almost as  
36 numerous as those using the facilities in Augusta, Savannah, and Brunswick, where manned  
37 clerk's offices are located; and

38 WHEREAS, the Statesboro court facility is in constant use for both District Court  
39 proceedings such as trials, hearings, and criminal sentencings and Bankruptcy Court  
40 proceedings such as Chapter 13 meetings of creditors, Chapter 7 meetings of creditors,  
41 Chapter 11 meetings of creditors, Chapter 12 meetings of creditors, confirmation hearings,  
42 and adversary proceedings; and

43 WHEREAS, if the Statesboro court facility is closed, citizens in Bulloch, Candler, Emanuel,  
44 Evans, Jenkins, Screven, Tattnall, and Toombs Counties will have to travel greater distances  
45 to attend court in Savannah, Augusta, or Brunswick; and

46 WHEREAS, the additional travel time and expense will pose a hardship for all concerned  
47 jurors, representatives of creditors in bankruptcy actions such as banks and other lenders,  
48 debtors in bankruptcy actions, attorneys, parties, and witnesses in court proceedings, many  
49 of whom reside outside of the counties within the Statesboro division; and

50 WHEREAS, the volume of usage of the Statesboro court facility indicates that it is an  
51 important facility for the administration of justice in the Southern District of Georgia.

52 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that  
53 the members of this body oppose the proposed decision by the United States General  
54 Services Administration to close the Statesboro court facility.

55 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized  
56 and directed to transmit an appropriate copy of this resolution to the appropriate officials at  
57 the General Services Administration; the Georgia congressional delegation; Honorable Joel  
58 Dubina, Chief Judge of the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals; Jim Gerstenlauer, Circuit  
59 Executive; Robert A. Peck, Commissioner of Public Buildings Service; James C. Duff,  
60 Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts; and James S. Weller, P.E.,  
61 Regional Commissioner.