

(S.B. 950)

(No. 118)

(Approved July 7, 2006)

AN ACT

To declare the 11th of January of each year as the “Salvador Brau Asencio Commemorative Day.”

STATEMENT OF MOTIVES

“Si tenemos historia y necesitamos nosotros para desvanecer,
con las reseñas del pasado, las vacilaciones del presente,
avanzando con paso medurado y firme hacia el porvenir”.

Salvador Brau-Asencio, son of Bartolomé Brau, decorative arts teacher, distinguished himself by being a Catalanian with liberal convictions. His father arrived in Cabo Rojo around 1830 to serve as administrator of the properties of the wealthy businessman from Catalonia, Fernando Riera. Shortly thereafter he was joined by his family, his wife and two sons, who soon passed away. Subsequently, Bartolomé married for the second time Luisa Asencio, daughter of Spanish parents proceeding from Venezuela. A child was born from this union in Cabo Rojo on January 11, 1842, and then baptized in a local parish with the name Salvador Bartolomé Higinio.

He was a student at the public schools of his hometown. In 1854, when only 12 years old, he obtained his diploma with high honors from the *Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Puerto Rico*. From the age of 18 he displayed his literary attributes and capabilities writing poetry and speeches. He also became interested in the theatrical arts, directing a drama society for three years. With his family finding itself in precarious financial conditions, he

was compelled to work in a business enterprise. Some years later when his father died he became head of his family having to support his five siblings.

With several of his friends, Salvador Brau founded a popular center of learning in Cabo Rojo where languages and various courses of a scientific nature were taught. Besides all these endeavors he also contributed to the written press in San Juan. Brau was a great writer, sociologist, historian, dramatist, narrator and poet. He especially distinguished himself in the field of political journalism of his times. By the age of 27 he had already written his play *Héroe y Mártir*, inspired by the political struggle of the *Comuneros de Castilla*, during the reign of Emperor Charles V. In 1871 the theater in Cabo Rojo was inaugurated with this play which was later performed in Mayagüez and other towns throughout the Island. The success of this venture stimulated him to continue writing for the theater, and thus to bring to the stage other works such as *De la superficie al fondo* (1874) and *La vuelta al hogar* (1877), this last being about the Pirate Cofresí.

Brau was a major participant in the political life of the Island as a member of the autonomist movement. In 1894 he moved to Spain, commissioned by the Provincial Council to conduct research about Puerto Rico at the *Archivo de Indias* in Seville. From 1903 until his death, Brau held the official position of Historian of Puerto Rico. His books constitute an important contribution to the study of Puerto Rican history. Some of these are *Puerto Rico y su historia*, *La colonización de Puerto Rico*, *La fundación de Ponce*, and *Historia de Puerto Rico*. He also wrote essays of a social content such as: *La Campesina* (1886), *Las clases jornaleras de Puerto Rico* (1882) and *La herencia devota* (1886), which bear testimony to his persistent dedication to the defense of the rural classes, a concern which highlights his dynamic nature as a thinker and sociologist.

During his last years he was appointed Official Chronicler of the Country. He died in San Juan, Puerto Rico on November 5, 1912. Because of his achievements and contributions to Puerto Rican culture it is the duty of all Puerto Ricans to exalt the person of this genius who devoted his soul, his life and his heart to ensuring the collective progress of the public education of his country.

Today and always the great achievements of this worthy son of Cabo Rojo and of Puerto Rico, Salvador Brau-Asencio, shall remain imbedded in our Puerto Rican minds and hearts.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF PUERTO RICO:

Section 1.-The 11th of January of each year is hereby declared to be the “Salvador Brau-Asencio Commemorative Day.”

Section 2.-The Governor shall, through a proclamation to that effect, urge the People of Puerto Rico to render tribute to the memory of that illustrious Puerto Rican Salvador Brau-Asencio.

Section 3.-The Department of State, the Department of Education and the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture shall be responsible for coordinating the protocular educational and commemorative activities that acknowledge the contributions of Salvador Brau-Asencio to Puerto Rican society.

Section 4.-This Act shall take effect immediately after its approval.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify to the Secretary of State that the following Act No. 118 (S.B. 950) of the 3rd Session of the 15th Legislature of Puerto Rico:

AN ACT to declare the 11th of January of each year as the “Salvador Brau-Asencio Commemorative Day”,

has been translated from Spanish to English and that the English version is correct.

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, today 8th of September of 2006.

Francisco J. Domenech
Director