

2015-J986

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating the 50th Anniversary of Bloody Sunday

WHEREAS, On March 7, 1965, 600 civil rights demonstrators marched 54 miles from Selma to the state capital of Montgomery, Alabama; and

WHEREAS, The demonstrators organized to promote black voter registration and challenge the killing of Jimmie Lee Jackson, who had been killed by an Alabama state trooper three weeks earlier while trying to protect his mother at a civil rights demonstration; and

WHEREAS, For 100 years after Emancipation laws, intimidation tactics, and violence prevented African-Americans from going to the polls; and

WHEREAS, In the city of Selma, African-Americans comprised more than half the population yet were only 2% of the registered voters; and

WHEREAS, The march was led by luminaries including John Lewis, then head of the voter registration effort of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and activist Hosea Williams; and

WHEREAS, The demonstrators silently proceeded from the steps of the Brown Chapel AME Church to the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma; and

WHEREAS, The demonstrators were brazenly attacked by heavily armed police officers; and

WHEREAS, On March 8, 1965, the NEW YORK TIMES described the events that day, "The first 10 or 20 Negroes were swept to the ground screaming, arms and legs flying and packs and bags went skittering across the grassy divider strip and on to the pavement on both sides. Those still on their feet retreated." The Times related the scene in make-shift hospital as: "Negroes lay on the floors and chairs, many weeping and moaning. A girl in red slacks was carried from the house screaming. From the hospital came a report that the victims had suffered fractures of ribs, heads, arms and legs, in addition to cuts and bruises."; and

WHEREAS, The violence against the peaceful demonstrators became known as "Bloody Sunday" and shocked millions of Americans; and

WHEREAS, Within 48 hours, demonstrations in support of the marchers were held in 80 cities across the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, On March 15, 1965, a mere eight days later, President Lyndon Baines Johnson announced to the nation before a televised Joint Session of Congress, "Allow men and women to register and vote whatever the color of their skin."; he championed the cause of the demonstrators who crossed the Pettus Bridge, "their cause must be our cause, too. Because it's not just Negroes, but really it's all of us, who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice. And we shall overcome."; and

WHEREAS, Less than five months later on August 6, 1965, President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law; and

WHEREAS, Within four years of enacting the Voting Rights Act, the number of blacks eligible to vote rose from 23% to 51%; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Bloody Sunday, and to recognize the heroism, sacrifice, and commitment of those who lost their lives and were injured during the events surrounding "Bloody Sunday"; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Ms. Hazel Dukes, President, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, New York State Conference.