

By: Reynolds

H.R. No. 647

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, In 2015, people across the nation are pausing to
2 reflect on the 50th anniversary of the historic civil rights march
3 from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, as well as the momentous changes
4 set in motion by that protest; and

5 WHEREAS, The march grew out of efforts to fight unjust voting
6 practices in the Jim Crow South, where African Americans were
7 routinely denied their right to cast a ballot; in Dallas County,
8 Alabama, members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
9 and the Dallas County Voters League banded together to organize a
10 series of voter registration drives in the early 1960s; the state's
11 systemic discrimination proved intractable, however, even after
12 ratification of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; and

13 WHEREAS, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other members of the
14 Southern Christian Leadership Conference arrived in Selma in early
15 1965 to help draw attention to the situation; racial tensions
16 flared on the fateful night of February 18, when segregationists
17 attacked peaceful demonstrators in the town of Marion, and a white
18 state trooper fatally shot Jimmie Lee Jackson, one of the African
19 American protestors; and

20 WHEREAS, Galvanized by that tragic killing, some 600
21 activists congregated at the foot of the Edmund Pettus Bridge in
22 Selma on March 7, 1965, to participate in a 54-mile protest march to
23 Montgomery, the state capital; blocking their path was a regiment
24 of state troopers and deputies, and when the demonstrators

1 attempted to cross the bridge, they were lashed with whips,
2 bludgeoned with billy clubs, and pelted with tear gas; the horrific
3 scene, dubbed "Bloody Sunday," unfolded on televisions across the
4 country, sparking nationwide outrage and motivating thousands of
5 people to descend on the town in solidarity with the marchers; and

6 WHEREAS, In defiance of a restraining order from a federal
7 court, Dr. King issued a clarion call for another march, which was
8 scheduled for two days later; it was met once again with armed
9 resistance, but in this instance, the marchers turned around at the
10 bridge, avoiding more violence; finally, on March 21, approximately
11 2,000 people from all walks of life gathered to complete the
12 long-awaited journey to Montgomery; backed by a ruling from a
13 federal court and protected by army and national guard troops, they
14 arrived in the capital four days later and were met by a crowd of
15 nearly 50,000 supporters; and

16 WHEREAS, Those volatile weeks brought to the fore the need
17 for federal legislative action, and while the events in Selma were
18 unfolding, President Lyndon B. Johnson addressed a joint session of
19 Congress, calling for the passage of a voting rights bill; on August
20 6, he signed into law the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which
21 prohibited racial discrimination in voting practices by federal,
22 state, and local governments; the effects of the law were
23 immediate, producing a meteoric rise in the number of registered
24 African American voters and fundamentally changing their role in
25 the political process; and

26 WHEREAS, The Selma to Montgomery March was a watershed moment
27 in the civil rights movement, powerfully symbolizing how peace and

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1 unity can overcome the forces of violence and intolerance; in
2 precipitating the landmark Voting Rights Act of 1965, the
3 demonstration helped give voice to millions of people long silenced
4 by an oppressive and unjust system, and it ensured that those rights
5 would be guaranteed to future generations; now, therefore, be it

6 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 84th Texas
7 Legislature hereby commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Selma to
8 Montgomery March and the signing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.