

By: Miles, et al.

S.R. No. 15

SENATE RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, July 17, 2021, marks the first anniversary of the death of civil rights icon and longtime congressman John Lewis; and

WHEREAS, The son of sharecroppers, John Robert Lewis was born in Troy, Alabama, on February 21, 1940; while trying to win admission to segregated Troy State University, he sought the guidance of the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. and became a valued colleague in the civil rights movement; he challenged segregated interstate travel in the South as one of the original 13 Freedom Riders, and when an angry mob attacked the group, he was left in a pool of his own blood outside a bus terminal in Montgomery, Alabama; as a co-founder and chair of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, he coordinated lunch-counter sit-ins to protest segregated facilities; in 1963, he was one of the "Big 6" who organized the historic March on Washington, and he energized the crowd as the event's youngest and fieriest speaker; and

WHEREAS, While leading demonstrations, Congressman Lewis stood strong in the face of violence, police beatings, and more than 40 arrests; his skull was fractured by state troopers during a voting rights march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, on a day known ever since as Bloody Sunday; televised images of the violence galvanized support for the Voting Rights

Act that was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson five months later, in August 1965; and

WHEREAS, Congressman Lewis worked his way through college, graduating from the American Baptist Theological Seminary and completing his bachelor's degree in religion and philosophy at Fisk University; he led the Voter Education Project, participated in anti-poverty efforts, and after serving on the Atlanta City Council, he won election to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1986; working tirelessly in behalf of the most vulnerable, he became known as "the conscience of the Congress"; he rose to become chair of the Oversight Subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee and advocated passionately for the Voter Empowerment Act, which seeks to modernize the electoral process and increase access to the ballot; and

WHEREAS, Over the course of more than three decades in office, Congressman Lewis continued to engage in nonviolent protest, community organizing, and grassroots activism; following the Pulse Nightclub shooting in 2016, he led Democrats in a 26-hour sit-in on the House floor to demand a debate over gun control measures; he reminded the many audiences he addressed to embrace "good trouble," and every year, he journeyed to Selma to lead a march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge; despite severe health challenges, he made one last trip in 2020 for the observance of the 55th anniversary of Bloody Sunday; and

WHEREAS, Congressman Lewis received such accolades as the NAACP Springarn Medal, the John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award, and the nation's highest civilian award, the Presidential

Medal of Freedom; he was presented with honorary degrees by universities across the country, among them Duke, Howard, Brandeis, and Emory Law, which also established the John Lewis Chair for Civil Rights and Social Justice; in 2016, he won a National Book Award for the third volume of his graphic novel about the civil rights movement, *March*; and

WHEREAS, A lifelong student of history, John Lewis introduced a bill every session for 15 years to create an institution dedicated to the unvarnished truth about the struggles and triumphs of the African American people; when the National Museum of African American History and Culture finally opened on the National Mall in 2016, he wrote, "By bringing the uncomfortable parts of our past out of the shadows, we can better understand what divides us and seek to heal those problems through our unity"; and

WHEREAS, The year since the death of John Lewis has been one of the most challenging and tumultuous our nation has ever seen, but his life continues to stand as a beacon of hope for the unity that can only be achieved through the steadfast pursuit of equal rights and justice for all; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate of the 87th Texas Legislature, 1st Called Session, hereby commemorate the first anniversary of the death of Congressman John Lewis and pay tribute to his remarkable legacy.