

Chapter No. 2155

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SENATE
CONCURRENT RESOLUTION
No. 580

Originated in Senate

Jenna O'Quinn

Secretary

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 580

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION TO COMMEMORATE THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF "THE FREEDOM RIDES AND FREEDOM SUMMER OF 1961."

WHEREAS, Governor Haley Barbour has announced plans for "A Celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Freedom Rides and Freedom Summer of 1961." The Freedom Riders were civil rights supporters from around the nation who rode buses into Mississippi to work to end segregation and promote voting rights. The 50th Anniversary events will be "a celebration dedicated to reconciliation and remembrance"; and

WHEREAS, Freedom Riders were civil rights activists that rode interstate buses into the segregated southern United States to test the United States Supreme Court decision *Boynton v. Virginia* (of 1960). The first Freedom Ride left Washington, D.C., on May 4, 1961. The Freedom Riders set out to challenge the status quo by riding various forms of public transportation in the South to challenge local laws or customs that enforced segregation. The Freedom Rides, and the violent reactions they provoked, bolstered the credibility of the American Civil Rights Movement and called national attention to the violent disregard for the law that was used to enforce segregation in the southern United States. Riders were arrested for trespassing, unlawful assembly, and violating state laws, along with other alleged offenses. Most of the Rides were sponsored by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE); and

WHEREAS, on May 24, 1961, Freedom Riders boarded buses in Montgomery, Alabama, for the journey to Jackson, Mississippi. Surrounded by Highway Patrol and the National Guard, the buses arrived in Jackson without incident, and the Riders were

immediately arrested when they tried to use the white-only facilities at the depot. This established a pattern followed by subsequent Freedom Rides, most of which traveled to Jackson, where they were arrested and jailed. The strategy became one of trying to fill the jails. Once the Jackson and Hinds County jails were filled to overflowing, Freedom Riders were transferred to the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman, Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, notable Freedom Riders included: James L. Farmer, Jr., US Representative Bob Filner (D-CA), US Representative John Lewis (D-GA), William Mahoney, Wally Nelson, James Peck, Ruby Doris Smith-Robinson, Hank Thomas, Delores Lynch Williams, Fred Douglas Clark, Sr., MacArthur Cotton, Jesse L. Harris, Mary Harrison Lee, Peter Stoner, Eddie Jean Thomas, Hezekiah Watkins, Tommie Watts, Jr., and Diane Nash; and

WHEREAS, the Freedom Rides sent shock waves through American society and established great credibility with blacks and whites throughout the United States, who became motivated to engage in direct action for civil rights. Perhaps most significantly, Freedom Riders, facing such danger on their behalf, impressed blacks living in rural areas throughout the South who later formed the backbone of the Civil Rights Movement; and

WHEREAS, Tougaloo College, a liberal arts college historically associated with the United Church of Christ, was the center of Freedom Rider coordination in Mississippi, and its name is prominently associated with the larger Civil Rights Movement. The leadership team for this celebration includes former Mississippi Supreme Court Justice Reuben Anderson, who was a student at Tougaloo when the Freedom Riders headquartered there. Judge Anderson was the first African-American Justice on the Mississippi Supreme Court, and he is a Senior Partner in the law firm of Phelps Dunbar. Most of the Riders were college students, many motivated by religious faith, and all were dedicated to nonviolent protest; and

WHEREAS, some hearts and minds remain to be changed, but the Freedom Riders opened the way:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That we do hereby commemorate the 50th Anniversary of "The Freedom Rides and Freedom Summer of 1961" and invite all Mississippians to join in this celebration of reconciliation.

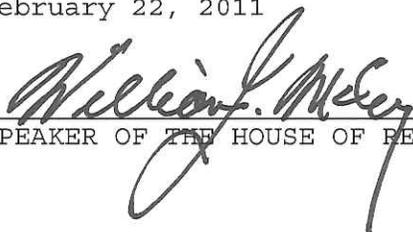
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be forwarded to the Governor and the Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, and be made available to the Capitol Press Corps.

ADOPTED BY THE SENATE
February 11, 2011



PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

ADOPTED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
February 22, 2011



SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES