

Chapter No. 2085  
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*SENATE*  
*CONCURRENT RESOLUTION*  
*No. 519*

Originated in Senate *Liz Welch* Secretary

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 519

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION TO COMMEMORATE AND RECOGNIZE THE LAST SPEECH GIVEN IN MISSISSIPPI BY THE REVEREND DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., DURING THE "POOR PEOPLE'S MARCH" ON MARCH 16, 1968, AT JENNINGS TEMPLE CHRISTIAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN GREENWOOD, MISSISSIPPI.

WHEREAS, on March 16, 1968, nineteen days before the assassination of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in Memphis, Tennessee, the Jennings Temple Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (CME) in Greenwood, Mississippi, led by Pastor Reverend William Wallace, opened its doors to host Dr. King and witness the last speech given in Mississippi during the "Poor People's March"; and

WHEREAS, the Poor People's Campaign was an 1968 effort to gain economic justice for poor people in the United States. It was organized by Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and carried out in the wake of King's assassination. He intended to dramatize the suffering of the nation's poor by bringing them to the United States Capitol. Poor people would live together on the National Mall - the long

strip of land between the United States Capitol and the Lincoln Memorial - and engage in widespread civil disobedience. King wanted to force the federal government to deal with poverty; and

WHEREAS, by the start of 1968, Dr. King was traveling widely to gather support for the Poor People's Campaign. He was intent on bringing a broad ethnic and racial mix of people to Washington to demonstrate that poverty was not simply a "Black" problem.

King and his staff reached out to Appalachian whites, Native Americans and Mexicans, among many other groups. In January 1968, King repeated his plea at mass rallies for the Poor People's Campaign in Birmingham, Alabama and Edwards, Mississippi. But he tried to infuse these rallies with something else: hope; and

WHEREAS, as the date grew closer for the start of the Campaign, Dr. King vowed that he and others would engage in civil disobedience. One of these "Pulpit Pleas" occurred in Greenwood, Mississippi, on March 16, 1968. The President of the Greenwood Voters League (Senator) David Jordan, was given the task of finding a place for Dr. King to speak, and Reverend William Wallace and the membership of Jennings Temple Christian Methodist Episcopal Church accepted this dangerous assignment. Dr. King was careful to emphasize in his sermon, however that the civil disobedience he and others carried out would be nonviolent. In all his life as a civil rights leader, Dr. King never wavered in his opposition to violence. As he reminded his audience, using violence to try to change society was not only morally wrong, it

almost never worked. On March 31, 1968, Dr. King delivered the last Sunday sermon of his life. He spoke at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. It was less than a month before he planned to return to the District as the head of the Poor People's Campaign. Dr. King spoke about what he called the three evils of American society: racism, poverty and war. He sounded deeply pessimistic about all three. Dr. King called American involvement in Vietnam "one of the most unjust wars that has ever been fought in the history of the world". Poverty, Dr. King observed, was nothing new. "What is new is that we now have the techniques and the resources to get rid of poverty," he said; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King never made it back to Washington. He was assassinated five days after he delivered the sermon at the National Cathedral; and

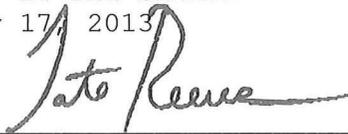
WHEREAS, as part of the Martin Luther King Day Observance on January 20, 2013, Greenwood area churches, businesses and organizations will include a peace and brotherhood march and a commemorative program. The theme is "Advancing the Dream: Healing Our Division in Homes, Schools, Communities, and Nation!" Area choirs and singers are asked to participate with the Friendship Senior Choir in providing the song service. The featured keynote speaker is Bishop Thomas L. Brown who resides in Jackson, Mississippi. He is Bishop of the Fourth Episcopal District of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church which encompasses the States of Louisiana and Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, the role of religion in the black community has changed since the days when Jennings Temple hosted Dr. King. In the 1960s, churches were the place where people shared their entire lives. It is with great pride that we note the historical context and significance of this event and this community congregation who ignited the consciousness of America to its responsibilities:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, that we do hereby commemorate and recognize the last speech given in Mississippi by the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., during the "Poor People's March" on March 16, 1968, at Jennings Temple Christian Methodist Episcopal Church and extend our best wishes to the citizens of Greenwood on their Observation of Martin Luther King Day.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to the Pastor of Jennings Temple and made available to the Capitol Press Corps.

ADOPTED BY THE SENATE  
January 17, 2013



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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

ADOPTED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
January 17, 2013



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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES