

By: Representatives Dortch, Johnson (94th), To: Rules
Anderson, Banks, Bell (65th), Calhoun,
Karriem, Straughter, Walker, Watson,
Williams-Barnes

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 48

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION FORMALLY REQUESTING THE JOINT
2 COMMITTEE ON THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS TO APPROVE THE REPLACEMENT OF
3 THE STATUE OF JAMES ZACHARIAH GEORGE THAT IS DISPLAYED IN STATUARY
4 HALL IN THE UNITED STATES CAPITOL WITH A STATUE OF CIVIL RIGHTS
5 ICON FANNIE LOU HAMER.

6 WHEREAS, the National Statuary Hall Collection in the United
7 States Capitol is comprised of 100 statues contributed by each of
8 the 50 states to honor persons notable in each state's history;
9 and

10 WHEREAS, 35 statues are now displayed in the National
11 Statuary Hall while others have been placed in other parts of the
12 Capitol, including the Crypt, the Hall of Columns and the Capitol
13 Visitor Center; and

14 WHEREAS, Mississippi has representational statues of
15 Jefferson Davis and James Zachariah George displayed, which were
16 crafted by Augustus Lukeman and dedicated in 1931; and

17 WHEREAS, Jefferson Davis, who authored *Rise and Fall of the*
18 *Confederate States*, served in the United States House of
19 Representatives and the United States Senate, was President of the



20 Confederate States and eventually made his home at Beauvoir, near
21 Biloxi, Mississippi; and

22 WHEREAS, James Zachariah George was a Confederate colonel who
23 served on the Mississippi Supreme Court and represented
24 Mississippi in the United States Senate, helped frame the future
25 Sherman Anti-Trust Act, served as a member of the Mississippi
26 Constitutional Convention of 1890 and successfully defended the
27 constitution before the Senate and the Supreme Court; and

28 WHEREAS, both men are important figures who reflect similar
29 times, but do not necessarily reflect the unified and progressive
30 spirit encompassing the Mississippi of today, as it is
31 Mississippi's sentimental desire to respect and celebrate the past
32 while honoring its evolution from past icons to present icons; and

33 WHEREAS, on October 6, 1917, the world was blessed with the
34 birth of an American voting rights advocate, civil rights leader
35 and generous philanthropist, Fannie Lou Hamer, and now, the State
36 of Mississippi, as well as the United States of America still
37 revel in the progress and promise that she bestowed upon her
38 fellow Mississippians and fellow Americans; and

39 WHEREAS, born in Montgomery County, Mississippi, the youngest
40 of 20 children born to Ella and James Lee Townsend, Fannie Lou and
41 her family moved to Sunflower County, Mississippi, to work as
42 sharecroppers on the plantation of W.D. Marlow, where she began
43 picking cotton at the age of six; and



44 WHEREAS, Fannie Lou attended school in a one-room schoolhouse
45 on the plantation from 1924 until 1930, but when the importance of
46 her ability to pick 200 to 300 pounds of cotton daily outweighed
47 the importance of her education, she was forced to drop out and
48 toil in the fields all day, fortunately though, not before she had
49 learned how to read and write; and

50 WHEREAS, her ability to read and write earned her the title
51 of time and record keeper for the plantation in 1944, and in 1945,
52 she married Perry "Pap" Hamer, and the two of them worked together
53 on the plantation for the next 18 years, until Mrs. Hamer was
54 fired for registering to vote; and

55 WHEREAS, beginning her trailblazing journey to help achieve
56 equality for African Americans at the polling place in the 1950s,
57 Mrs. Hamer attended several annual civil rights conferences in
58 Mound Bayou, Mississippi, where she became inspired from civil
59 rights activists such as Mahalia Jackson, Thurgood Marshall and
60 Representative Charles Diggs of Michigan; and

61 WHEREAS, in 1961, Mrs. Hamer truly realized the importance of
62 her pleas for equality and change in the South and across the
63 nation when she entered an operating room to have a tumor removed,
64 but left without a tumor or any reproductive organs, as the white
65 doctor from Mississippi had given her a hysterectomy without her
66 consent as part of the state's plan to reduce the number of poor
67 African Americans located within its borders, a practice common in
68 the South during that time; and



69 WHEREAS, as a result of her "Mississippi appendectomy," the
70 phrase she coined for her egregiously uninformed and nonconsensual
71 sterilization, Mr. and Mrs. Hamer were never able to have children
72 of their own, but unwilling to let racism prohibit them from being
73 parents, they later raised and eventually adopted two girls; and

74 WHEREAS, "sick and tired of being sick and tired," on August
75 23, 1962, after listening to an inspiring sermon from Reverend
76 James Bevel, an organizer for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating
77 Committee (SNCC) and associate of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who
78 encouraged African Americans to register to vote despite the
79 hardships waiting for them at the polls, Mrs. Hamer did just that,
80 as she was the first volunteer to register to vote; and

81 WHEREAS, on August 31, the courageous Mrs. Hamer traveled on
82 a bus with other recipients of Reverend Bevel's sermon to
83 Indianola, Mississippi, to register to vote, and to help calm the
84 nerves of her fellow passengers and help them understand that what
85 they were doing was the right thing, she sang Christian hymns,
86 including "Go Tell It on the Mountain" and "This Little Light of
87 Mine"; and

88 WHEREAS, the day she registered to vote proved to be
89 bittersweet for Mrs. Hamer, because after that bus ride to
90 Indianola, she had finally registered to vote, the same right that
91 all other Americans had and a step towards true equality, but upon
92 her return to Marlow's plantation, she was fired for doing the one
93 thing she had fought so hard to do; and



94 WHEREAS, her lack of employment ultimately benefitted the
95 Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi, as the trials, tribulations
96 and mostly, perseverance, reached the ears of Bob Moses, the SNCC
97 organizer, who recruited her to perform activist work all over the
98 South, with her base location remaining in Mississippi; and

99 WHEREAS, during one of her travel days, Mrs. Hamer and other
100 activists were returning to Mississippi from a literacy workshop
101 in Charleston, South Carolina, when they were stopped and falsely
102 arrested in Winona, Mississippi, but the ugliness did not end
103 there as once they were in jail, her colleagues were beaten by
104 police in the booking room and she was taken to a cell where the
105 police had ordered two other inmates to beat her with a blackjack,
106 which they did until she nearly died; and

107 WHEREAS, after being falsely detained for three days, Mrs.
108 Hamer was finally released from the cell that would haunt her for
109 years to come, and her recovery from the brutal beating lasted for
110 over a month, but despite her recurring physical and psychological
111 problems that resulted from that horrendous incident, she bravely
112 continued advocating in Mississippi and organizing voter
113 registration drives, including the "Freedom Ballot Campaign" in
114 1963 and the "Freedom Summer" initiative in 1964; and

115 WHEREAS, in the summer of 1964, Mrs. Hamer helped organize
116 the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, or "Freedom Democrats,"
117 to challenge Mississippi's all-white, anti-civil rights delegation
118 to the Democratic National Convention, which failed to represent



all Mississippians, and through her efforts, and her many, many
inspirational speeches on the issue, in 1968, the Freedom
Democrats were finally seated at the convention and the party
adopted a clause that demanded equality of representation from
their states' delegation; and

WHEREAS, in 1972, Mrs. Hamer was elected as a national party
delegate, and throughout her life, she continued to work at the
grassroots-level for programs such as Head Start, the Freedom Farm
Cooperative in Sunflower County, Mississippi, and Martin Luther
King, Jr.'s Poor People's Campaign; and

WHEREAS, a day that will forever be associated with grief and
sorrow in the minds and hearts of all Americans, on March 14,
1977, at the age of 59, complications from hypertension and breast
cancer ended the life of our beloved civil rights leader, Mrs.
Fannie Lou Hamer, but her legacy of change and progress will
continue to encourage young leaders in Mississippi and around the
country for generations to come; and

WHEREAS, 2 U.S.C. Section 2132 allows a state to request the
Joint Committee on the Library of Congress to approve the removal
of a previously placed statue from the collection and the
replacement of it with an equally suitable and socially inclusive
display that is representative of the entirety of the state's
diverse citizenry; and

WHEREAS, if the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress
approves a request, the architect of the Capitol shall enter into



an agreement with the state to carry out the replacement in accordance with the request and any conditions that the Joint Committee may require for its approval, and such agreement shall provide that the new statue shall be subject to the same conditions and restrictions as applied to any statue provided by a state under 2 U.S.C. Section 2131 and the state shall pay any costs related to the replacement, including costs in connection with the design, construction, transportation and placement of the new statue, the removal and transportation of the statue being replaced and any unveiling ceremony; and

WHEREAS, several states have chosen to replace existing statues, thereby including representations of Dwight Eisenhower, Ronald Reagan, Gerald Ford, Thomas Edison and Hellen Keller; and

WHEREAS, the Mississippi Legislature desires to replace the statue of James Zachariah George with a statue of civil rights legend Fannie Lou Hamer, to pay homage to such a selfless individual and honor and cherish the memory of this patron citizen of Mississippi, and to further reflect the transformative power of Mississippi from its past to its present; and

WHEREAS, we request the Governor of the State of Mississippi to affirm the efforts of this Legislature by issuing a proclamation or statement approving the request for the replacement of the statue, and to create a commission of Mississippi artisans and artists who are authorized to solicit and



168 collect private contributions for the creation and placement of
169 the statue of Fannie Lou Hamer; and

170 WHEREAS, it is incumbent upon this Legislature to pursue the
171 interest of its citizens by ensuring that statues representing our
172 state wholly reflect the astounding strides made by all citizens,
173 particularly in this instance when the state itself bears the
174 moniker of being the "birthplace of the Civil Rights Movement,"
175 and there has been no better ambassador of our state than the
176 distinguished and incomparable Fannie Lou Hamer:

177 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
178 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE SENATE CONCURRING
179 THEREIN, That we do hereby submit this formal request to the Joint
180 Committee on the Library of Congress to approve the replacement of
181 the statue of James Zachariah George with a statue of civil rights
182 icon Fannie Lou Hamer in the Statuary Hall of the United States
183 Capitol.

184 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be
185 furnished to the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress, to
186 the members of the Mississippi Congressional delegation and to the
187 members of the Capitol Press Corps.

