

By: Representatives Johnson, Hines, Harness, Porter, Clark To: Rules; State Affairs

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 12

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION FORMALLY REQUESTING THE JOINT
2 COMMITTEE ON THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS TO APPROVE THE REPLACEMENT OF
3 THE STATUES OF JAMES ZACHARIAH GEORGE AND JEFFERSON DAVIS THAT ARE
4 DISPLAYED IN STATUARY HALL IN THE UNITED STATES CAPITOL WITH A
5 STATUE OF BOTH CIVIL RIGHTS ICON, FANNIE LOU HAMER, AND SENATOR
6 HIRAM RHODES REVELS, THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN TO SERVE AS A
7 UNITED STATES SENATOR.

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

12 WHEREAS, thirty-five statues are now displayed in the
13 National Statuary Hall, while others have been placed in other
14 parts of the Capitol, including the Crypt, the Hall of Columns and
15 the Capitol Visitor Center; and

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

19 WHEREAS, Jefferson Davis, who authored *Rise and Fall of the*
20 *Confederate States*, served in the United States House of



21 Representatives and the United States Senate, was President of the
22 Confederate States, and eventually made his home at Beauvoir, near
23 Biloxi, Mississippi; and

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

131 WHEREAS, a day that will forever be associated with grief and
132 sorrow in the minds and hearts of all Americans, on March 14,
133 1977, at the age of 59, complications from hypertension and breast
134 cancer ended the life of our beloved civil rights leader, Mrs.
135 Fannie Lou Hamer, but her legacy of change and progress will
136 continue to encourage young leaders in Mississippi and around the
137 country for generations to come; and

138 WHEREAS, in addition to Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer's outstanding
139 legacy, it is also important to recognize the incredible impact of
140 Senator Hiram Rhodes Revels, the first African American to serve
141 in the United States Congress, and one of Mississippi's most
142 iconic figures who stepped into history and pioneered toward
143 equality and justice; and

144 WHEREAS, one hundred and fifty three years ago, on February
145 25, 1870, visitors in the packed United States Senate galleries



146 burst into applause as Senator-elect Hiram Rhodes Revels, from
147 Mississippi, entered the chamber to take his oath of office, and
148 those present knew that they were witnessing an event of great
149 historical significance, as he was about to become the first
150 African American to serve in the United States Congress; and

151 WHEREAS, Senator Revels was born a free man in Fayetteville,
152 North Carolina, on September 27, 1827, and was the son of a
153 Baptist preacher, and as a youth, he took lessons at a private
154 school run by an African-American woman, and eventually traveled
155 north to further his education, attending seminaries in Indiana
156 and Ohio, becoming a minister of the African Methodist Episcopal
157 (AME) Church in 1845, and eventually studying theology at Knox
158 College in Illinois; and

159 WHEREAS, during the turbulent decade of the 1850s, Senator
160 Revels preached to free and enslaved men and women in various
161 states while surreptitiously assisting fugitive slaves, and when
162 the Civil War began in 1861, he was serving as a pastor in
163 Baltimore, Maryland, and before long, he was forming regiments of
164 African-American soldiers, serving as a Union army chaplain in
165 Mississippi, and establishing schools for freed slaves in
166 Missouri; and

167 WHEREAS, after the war ended, Senator Revels settled in
168 Natchez, Mississippi, where he served as presiding elder of the
169 AME Church, and in 1868, he was appointed as an alderman for
170 Natchez, and in 1869, he was elected to the Mississippi Senate, as



171 one of thirty-five African Americans elected to the Mississippi
172 Legislature that year; and

173 WHEREAS, in 1870, as Mississippi sought readmission to
174 representation in the United States Congress, and as the
175 Republican Party firmly controlled both houses of Congress, and
176 also dominated the southern state legislatures, that, along with
177 the pending ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, set the stage
178 for the election of Congress's first African-American members; and

179 WHEREAS, one of the first orders of business for the new
180 Mississippi Legislature when it convened on January 11, 1870, was
181 to fill the vacancies in the United States Senate, which had
182 remained empty since the 1861 withdrawal of Albert Brown and
183 Confederate president, Jefferson Davis; and

184 WHEREAS, representing around one-quarter of the state
185 legislative body, the African-American legislators insisted that
186 one of the vacancies be filled by an African American, and since
187 Senator Revels had impressed his colleagues with an impassioned
188 prayer, legislators agreed that the shorter of the two terms, set
189 to expire in March 1871, would go to him; and

190 WHEREAS, Mississippi gained readmission on February 23, 1870,
191 and Senator Henry Wilson, one of the United States Senate's
192 strongest civil rights advocates, promptly presented Senator
193 Revels' credentials to the Senate, and three senators immediately
194 issued a challenge, arguing that Senator Revels had not been a
195 United States citizen for the constitutionally required nine



196 years, citing the 1857 *Dred Scott* Supreme Court decision, arguing
197 that he did not gain citizenship until at least 1866, with the
198 passage of that year's civil rights act, and perhaps not until the
199 Fourteenth Amendment was ratified in 1868, and by this logic,
200 Senator Revels could only claim that he had been a United States
201 citizen for, at most, four years; and

202 WHEREAS, Senator Revels and his supporters dismissed the
203 challenge, insisting that the Fourteenth Amendment had repealed
204 the *Dred Scott* decision, and they pointed out that long before
205 1866, Senator Revels had voted in the state of Ohio, certainly
206 qualifying him as a citizen; and

207 WHEREAS, by an overwhelming margin, the United States Senate
208 voted 48 to 8 to seat Senator Revels, and two days later, he was
209 escorted to the well by Senator Wilson, and took the oath of
210 office on February 25, 1870; and

211 WHEREAS, three weeks later, the Senate galleries were again
212 filled to capacity, as Senator Revels rose to deliver his maiden
213 speech, and seeing himself as a representative of African American
214 interests throughout the nation, he spoke against an amendment to
215 the Georgia readmission bill that could be used to prevent African
216 Americans from holding state office; and

217 WHEREAS, Senator Revels made good use of his time in office,
218 championing education for African Americans, speaking out against
219 racial segregation, and fighting efforts to undermine the civil
220 and political rights of African Americans, and when his brief term



221 ended on March 3, 1871, he returned to Mississippi, where he
222 became president of the first African-American land grant college
223 established in the United States, Alcorn A&M College, now Alcorn
224 State University; and

225 WHEREAS, in 1873, Senator Revels took a leave of absence from
226 his position as president of Alcorn to serve as Mississippi's
227 interim Secretary of State after the sudden death of his friend,
228 James Lynch; and

229 WHEREAS, in July 1876, Senator Revels returned to his former
230 position as president of Alcorn, and he also edited the
231 *Southwestern Christian Advocate* newspaper, the official newspaper
232 of the AME Church, and after his retirement from Alcorn in 1882,
233 he returned to his former church in Holly Springs, Mississippi,
234 and remained active in the religious community, teaching theology
235 at Shaw University, now Rust College, in Holly Springs, and
236 serving as the AME's district superintendent, and on January 16,
237 1901, he passed away in Aberdeen, Mississippi, while attending a
238 religious conference; and

239 WHEREAS, during the Reconstruction Era, a total of seventeen
240 African Americans served in the United States Congress, fifteen in
241 the House of Representatives and two in the Senate, and the
242 significance of the courageous and pioneering service of Senator
243 Revels and other African-American congressmen of the
244 Reconstruction Era cannot be overstated, and although the struggle



245 to fully achieve equality would continue for years to come, their
246 remarkable accomplishments opened doors for others to follow; and

247 WHEREAS, 2 USC Section 2132 allows a state to request the
248 Joint Committee on the Library of Congress to approve the removal
249 of a previously placed statue from the collection and the
250 replacement of it with an equally suitable and socially inclusive
251 display that is representative of the entirety of the state's
252 diverse citizenry; and

253 WHEREAS, if the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress
254 approves a request, the architect of the Capitol shall enter into
255 an agreement with the state to carry out the replacement in
256 accordance with the request and any conditions that the Joint
257 Committee may require for its approval, and such agreement shall
258 provide that the new statue shall be subject to the same
259 conditions and restrictions as applied to any statue provided by a
260 state under 2 USC Section 2131 and the state shall pay any costs
261 related to the replacement, including costs in connection with the
262 design, construction, transportation and placement of the new
263 statue, the removal and transportation of the statue being
264 replaced and any unveiling ceremony; and

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

268 WHEREAS, the Mississippi Legislature desires to replace the
269 statues of James Zachariah George and Jefferson Davis with a



270 statue of both civil rights legends, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Senator
271 Hiram Rhodes Revels, the first African American to serve as a
272 Senator in the United States Congress, to honor and cherish the
273 extraordinary legacies of these patron citizens of Mississippi,
274 and to further reflect the transformative power of Mississippi
275 from its past to its present; and

276 WHEREAS, we request the Governor of the State of Mississippi
277 to affirm the efforts of this Legislature by issuing a
278 proclamation or statement approving the request for the
279 replacement of the statues, and to create a commission of
280 Mississippi artisans and artists who are authorized to solicit and
281 collect private contributions for the creation and placement of
282 the statues of Fannie Lou Hamer and Senator Hiram Rhodes Revels;
283 and

284 WHEREAS, it is incumbent upon this Legislature to pursue the
285 interest of its citizens by ensuring that statues representing our
286 state wholly reflect the astounding strides made by all citizens,
287 particularly in this instance when the state itself bears the
288 moniker of being the "birthplace of the Civil Rights Movement,"
289 and there have been no better ambassadors of our state than the
290 distinguished and incomparable Fannie Lou Hamer and Senator Hiram
291 Rhodes Revels:

292 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
293 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE SENATE CONCURRING
294 THEREIN, That we do hereby submit this formal request to the Joint



295 Committee on the Library of Congress to approve the replacement of
296 the statues of James Zachariah George and Jefferson Davis with
297 statues of Fannie Lou Hamer and Senator Hiram Rhodes Revels in the
298 Statuary Hall of the United States Capitol.

299 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be
300 furnished to the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress, to
301 the members of the Mississippi Congressional delegation and to the
302 members of the Capitol Press Corps.

