

HOUSE RESOLUTION 21

By Gilmore

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Congressman John Lewis for his astute service to the citizens of the United States.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to specially recognize those estimable public servants and renowned civil rights leaders who have dedicated themselves to improving the quality of life for their fellow citizens; and

WHEREAS, Congressman John Lewis is one such venerable person who evinces the greatest integrity and probity in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, Congressman Lewis has distinguished himself as a public-spirited citizen of the highest order and as an exceptional asset to the good citizens of Georgia's Fifth Congressional District, who have evinced their firm belief in Congressman Lewis's abilities as a legislator by electing him to serve as their representative to Congress since 1986; and

WHEREAS, known as the conscience of the United States Congress, John Lewis's devotion to the highest ethical standards and moral principles has earned him respect and admiration of his constituents as well as his colleagues on both sides of the aisle; and

WHEREAS, Congressman Lewis currently serves as a member of the House, Ways, and Means Committee and the Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support; the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Oversight; and the Senior Chief Deputy Whip of the Democratic Party in the United States House of Representatives; and

WHEREAS, the son of sharecroppers, John Lewis was born on February 21, 1940 and attended segregated public schools in Pike County, Alabama; and

WHEREAS, choosing to complete his education in the great state of Tennessee, Congressman John Lewis earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Religion and Philosophy from Fisk University, is a graduate of the American Baptist Theological Seminary, and has also been

awarded over fifty honorary degrees from prestigious colleges and universities throughout the country, including Spelman College, Princeton University, University of New Hampshire, Johnson C. Smith University, Delaware State University, Duke University, Morehouse College, Clark-Atlanta University, Howard University, Brandeis University, Columbia University, Fisk University, Williams College, Georgetown University, and Troy State University; and

WHEREAS, known as one of the Big Six Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement, John Lewis has dedicated his life to protecting human rights, securing civil liberties, and building what he calls “The Beloved Community” in America; and

WHEREAS, as Chairman of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) during the height of the Civil Rights Movement, John Lewis, with a philosophy of quiet strength, endured more than forty arrests, physical beatings, and serious injuries to boldly challenge the deplorable Jim Crow system by organizing sit-in demonstrations at segregated lunch counters in Nashville, risk his life in the Freedom Rides, organize and speak at the historic “March on Washington” in August of 1963, organize and coordinate voter registration drives and community action programs during the Mississippi Freedom Summer, and lead 600 peaceful, orderly protestors across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama during what became known as “Bloody Sunday”; and

WHEREAS, after leaving the SNCC in 1966, John Lewis remained at the vanguard of progressive social movements and human rights struggles as an Associate Director of the Field Foundation and Director of the Voter Education Project, and in 1977, he was appointed by President Jimmy Carter to direct more than 250,000 volunteers of the federal volunteer agency, ACTION; and

WHEREAS, having inspired freedom-loving people throughout the land, this intrepid individual took his tremendous talents and noble ideals into public office, winning election to the Atlanta City Council in 1981 and the United States House of Representatives in 1986; and

WHEREAS, his esteemed life and legendary accomplishments have been chronicled in numerous books, including, *Freedom Riders: John Lewis and Jim Zwerg on the Front Lines of the Civil Rights Movement* by Ann Bausum, *John Lewis in the Lead* by Jim Haskins and

Kathleen Benson, *The Children* by David Halberstam, several books by Taylor Branch, and his own biography entitled *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement*; and

WHEREAS, his sage insights have also been captured through countless documentaries, news broadcasts, and journals, including *Eyes on the Prize*, the *Today Show*, CNN Headline News, CNN's *American Morning*, CSPAN's *Washington Journal*, *Time* magazine, *Newsweek* magazine, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, *USA Today*, the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, the *Boston Globe*, the *Dallas Morning News*, the *Miami Herald*, the *Philadelphia Tribune*, *Roll Call* magazine, and *Congressional Quarterly*, among others; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to honors and awards, John Lewis has received a plethora of accolades throughout his extraordinary life, including the Lincoln Medal from the historic Ford's Theatre; the Golden Plate Award from the Academy of Excellence; the Preservation Hero Award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation; the Capital Award from the National Council of La Raza; the Martin Luther King, Jr., Non-Violent Peace Prize; the President's Medal from Georgetown University; the NAACP Spingarn Medal; the National Education Association Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial Award; and the only John F. Kennedy "Profile in Courage Award" for Lifetime Achievement ever granted by the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation; the Timberland Company has also developed the John Lewis Award and a John Lewis Scholarship Fund in honor of his unparalleled commitment to humanitarian service; and

WHEREAS, throughout his long and distinguished career as a public servant, John Lewis has worked tirelessly on behalf of his constituents and all Americans, bringing to his office an honorable bearing and the time-honored values of hard work and common sense; and

WHEREAS, his many professional accomplishments aside, Congressman Lewis is perhaps most appreciative of the love and support he shares with his wife, Lillian Miles, and their son, John Miles; and

WHEREAS, a catalyst for positive change who helped this great nation mature into an even more just and equitable democracy, John Lewis epitomizes the ideal of the consummate professional, dedicated public servant, and true American hero; and

WHEREAS, Congressman Lewis is wholly committed to the noble precepts of public service that have earned Tennessee recognition as the "Volunteer State," and he should be specially recognized; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we hereby commend John Lewis for his honorable and astute service to the people of the United States as the Congressman of Georgia's Fifth Congressional District, salute his unswerving commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction, and express our deep gratitude for his outstanding contributions to civil rights and economic and social justice.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.