

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 460

Commemorating the life of Dr. James Leonard Farmer, Jr., and the 50th Anniversary of the Freedom Rides.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 23, 2011
 Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 26, 2011

WHEREAS, following the United States Supreme Court decision in *Boynton v. Virginia*, 364 U.S. 454 (1960), which desegregated interstate public transportation, an interracial group of 13 brave individuals boarded two commercial buses in Washington, D.C. on May 4, 1961, to travel south, hoping to reach New Orleans, Louisiana, their final destination, on May 17, 1961, the seventh anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, to challenge discriminatory racial segregation laws; and

WHEREAS, this nonviolent effort to seek justice and enforcement of the laws of the land initiated and organized by Dr. James Leonard Farmer, Jr., national director of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), became known as the Freedom Rides; and

WHEREAS, despite federal rulings that it was unconstitutional to segregate passengers on interstate public transportation, upon reaching the Deep South, the Freedom Riders met obstinate resistance and encountered antagonism, verbal abuse, acts of violence, and incarceration; nevertheless, they did not relinquish their commitment to the nonviolent pursuit of equality and social justice; and

WHEREAS, more than 60 Freedom Rides, involving more than 400 citizens throughout the nation, continued throughout the summer and fall of 1961, and focused national attention on issues of racial injustice and discrimination; and

WHEREAS, although the Freedom Riders failed to reach their destination of New Orleans, their peaceful protests, determination, and stouthearted bravery in the face of grave personal danger for the sake of racial justice galvanized and inspired the nation; and

WHEREAS, the efforts of the Freedom Riders ultimately encouraged the federal government to enforce laws and judicial rulings that guaranteed the rights and safety of all interstate public transportation passengers, regardless of race; and

WHEREAS, Dr. James Leonard Farmer, Jr., a child prodigy and son of a minister and college professor and the grandson of a slave, was born on January 20, 1920, in Marshall, Texas, was prominent among the brave men and women who risked their lives in the pursuit of human rights, equality, and justice, and was personally subjected to indignity and arrest as a Freedom Rider; and

WHEREAS, a resident of Spotsylvania and a distinguished professor of history and American studies at the University of Mary Washington, Dr. James Leonard Farmer, Jr., taught for more than a decade, enlightening and enriching the educational experience of students with his vivid, firsthand accounts of personal sacrifice and courage during the Civil Rights struggles of the 1960s; and

WHEREAS, a founding member of CORE, which became a catalyst in the Civil Rights Movement, Dr. James Leonard Farmer, Jr., was awarded the nation's highest civilian award, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, which bestows praise upon one of the nation's most influential civil rights leaders for his contributions and achievements; and

WHEREAS, Dr. James Leonard Farmer, Jr., died on July 9, 1999, in Fredericksburg, and the University of Mary Washington erected the James Farmer commemorative bust and memorial in his memory and continues to honor his legacy through the James Farmer Multicultural Center and James Farmer Scholars Program; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and appropriate that the brave actions of Dr. James Leonard Farmer, Jr., and the Freedom Riders be recognized and commemorated on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the 1961 Freedom Rides; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the life of Dr. James Leonard Farmer, Jr., and the 50th Anniversary of the Freedom Rides be commemorated; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate transmit a copy of this resolution to Richard V. Hurley, President of the University of Mary Washington, requesting that he further disseminate copies of this resolution to the family of Dr. James Leonard Farmer, Jr., so that they may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter.

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