

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 31

Commemorating the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 12, 2018

Agreed to by the Senate, March 5, 2018

WHEREAS, 50 years ago, on April 4, 1968, a powerful and peaceful voice for freedom was lost when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated on the balcony of his motel room in Memphis, Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, during his short lifetime, Dr. King used his eloquence, his leadership, his sense of morality, and his belief in the power of peaceful resistance to awaken the nation's conscience and advance the cause of civil rights; and

WHEREAS, as founding member and first president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Dr. King preached a message of nonviolence that became deeply rooted throughout the nation, particularly in Southern communities where he sought to free African Americans from racial oppression and injustice, and shaped the protests and campaigns that brought about new freedoms; and

WHEREAS, during the course of these campaigns, Dr. King was instrumental in Virginia's fight for civil rights, making dozens of trips to the Commonwealth to encourage African American voter registration and involvement in the political process, to protest the closing of public schools and the widespread resistance to desegregation, to guide civil demonstrations against deeply entrenched segregation, and to preach a message of love and nonviolence across the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King promoted legislative change to encode the civil rights that he worked to advance, contributing to the dismantling of Jim Crow, the desegregation of institutions, and the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965; and

WHEREAS, in response to fierce opposition, threats, surveillance, imprisonment, and violence from those who resisted or feared his message, Dr. King offered peace and unflinching courage in return; and

WHEREAS, through his life's work, Dr. King brought the nation and the world closer to his vision of the "Beloved Community," in which peace, justice, and love prevail over hatred and division; and

WHEREAS, the life of Dr. King was taken when he was 39 years old, his work unfinished, as he sought to improve the lives and working conditions of sanitation workers protesting in Memphis and as he organized the Poor People's Campaign in Washington, D.C., which would give a unified voice to those living in poverty; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King lived the message of love that he preached, believing, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that"; and

WHEREAS, a half-century later, the power of Dr. King's words and actions remains undiminished, their meaning relevant and their direction clear; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King's dream remains to be fully realized, "that one day this Nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commemorate the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and encourage the citizens of the Commonwealth to observe this solemn occasion, to recall the legacy of Dr. King, and to heed his call for unity, love, and compassion; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit a copy of this resolution to the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Chairman and Executive Director of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, the Chancellor of the Virginia Community College System, the President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference Virginia State Unit, the Executive Director of the Virginia State Conference NAACP, and the Chief Executive Officer of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta, Georgia, requesting that they further disseminate copies of this resolution to their respective constituents so that they may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter.

ENROLLED

HJ31ER