

AS ADOPTED BY SENATE, SEPTEMBER 1, 2020

SENATE RESOLUTION NO.137

Senator Hertel, Ananich, Geiss and Wojno offered the following resolution:

1 A resolution to acknowledge the 55th Anniversary of the Voting
2 Rights Act of 1965.

3 Whereas, The fundamental, undergirding principle of democracy
4 is the immutable right for all citizens to participate in the
5 voting process; and

6 Whereas, When this principle freedom is endangered, it is
7 incumbent upon all citizens to demand relief from any threat of
8 disenfranchisement; and

9 Whereas, Congress ratified the 15th Amendment 150 years ago,
10 declaring that the right to vote shall not be denied or abridged on
11 the basis of race, color, or previous condition of servitude; and

1 Whereas, In 1870, during reconstruction, the first African
2 Americans were elected to serve in state, local, and federal
3 offices, and in unison, the 41st Congress of the United States
4 seated its first African American Senator, Hiram Revels;
5 regrettably, there would be almost nine decades until the next
6 African American was elected to the United States Senate; and

7 Whereas, Between 1870 and 1965, voters faced "first-generation
8 barriers" such as poll taxes, literacy tests, vouchers of "good
9 character," disqualification for "crimes of moral turpitude", and
10 other tactics intended to keep African Americans from registering
11 to vote and casting ballots on Election Day; and

12 Whereas, By 1910, violence and intimidation resulted in the
13 disenfranchisement of several black citizens with their removal
14 from the voting polls in former Confederate States, undermining the
15 promise of equal protection under the law; and

16 Whereas, During the 1920s, African Americans in Selma, Alabama
17 formed the Dallas County Voters League (DCVL); and

18 Whereas, In the 1960s, in partnership with the Student
19 Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the DCVL held
20 registration drives and classes to help African Americans in Dallas
21 County pass the literacy tests required to register to vote; and

22 Whereas, On February 26, 1965, civil rights activist, Jimmy
23 Lee Jackson died after he was brutally beaten and shot by an
24 Alabama State Trooper during a peaceful protest for voting rights.
25 His death was the impetus for the first Selma to Montgomery March;
26 and

27 Whereas, On Sunday, March 7, 1965, the first march from Selma
28 to Montgomery took place, of which was led by John Lewis, with
29 approximately 600 hundred participants; and

1 Whereas, Several armed Alabama State Troopers, some on
2 horseback, attacked the marchers with nightsticks, tear gas, and
3 whips as the marchers crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge; and

4 Whereas, The march, known today as "Bloody Sunday" for the
5 horrific attack on peaceful marchers, sparked national outrage as
6 it was broadcast on nationwide television. This led to a national
7 outcry for the passage of the Voting Rights Act; and

8 Whereas, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights
9 Act into law on August 6, 1965, which provided federal oversight of
10 voter registration and the elimination of poll taxes; and

11 Whereas, The Voting Rights Act of 1965 is still recognized as
12 landmark, bi-partisan legislation and regarded as one of the most
13 effective civil rights laws ever written. It would be amended five
14 times to offer more protections as well; and

15 Whereas, This historic legislation passed with the intent to
16 ban discriminatory voting policies at all levels of government and
17 stand as a guardian for every American's right to vote; and

18 Whereas, The Voting Rights Act of 1965 is credited for the
19 enfranchisement of millions of Black Indigenous People of Color as
20 well as the diversification of the electorate and legislative
21 bodies throughout all levels of government; and

22 Whereas, In June 2013, the Supreme Court struck down key
23 sections of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that were designed to
24 prevent discriminatory voting policies that disenfranchise Black
25 Indigenous People of Color voters; and

26 Whereas, Despite 55 years of progress, Black Indigenous People
27 of Color continue to face voting barriers in jurisdictions with a
28 history of discrimination; and

29 Whereas, In order to build a more perfect union, we must

1 continue to advance the cause of voter equality, advocate for equal
2 access to the political process, and protect the voting rights of
3 every American; now, therefore, be it

4 Resolved by the Senate, That we acknowledge the 55th
5 Anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, while also honoring
6 and remembering all those who struggled and died for this freedom.