

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 134

Senators Geiss, Shink, McMorrow, McDonald Rivet, Camilleri, McCann, Cavanagh, Singh, Hertel, Cherry, Irwin, Chang, Bayer, Wojno, Anthony, Klinefelt and Damoose offered the following resolution:

1 A resolution to recognize the 60th anniversary of Freedom
2 Summer.

3 Whereas, In the early 1960s, Mississippi was the most brutally
4 segregated state in the country, having the lowest per capita and
5 family income of any state, with huge gaps between white and black
6 family incomes and education levels; and

7 Whereas, Many civil rights activists in Mississippi were
8 beaten, shot, and murdered, including Medgar Evers; and

9 Whereas, African Americans were effectively barred from
10 holding any elected office, serving on juries, and from registering

1 or voting without facing possible violence; and

2 Whereas, Mississippi was effectively a one-party state,
3 controlled by the Democratic party, which barred African Americans
4 from membership; and

5 Whereas, The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the
6 Congress of Racial Equality, the Southern Christian Leadership
7 Council, and the National Association for the Advancement of
8 Colored People (NAACP) came together in 1962 to form the Council of
9 Federated Organizations (COFO) with the purpose of challenging
10 segregation and exposing the violent culture that subjugated
11 African Americans; and

12 Whereas, In the summer of 1964, COFO made a strategic decision
13 to campaign and bring volunteers from all over the country to
14 Mississippi to register Black voters, create Freedom Schools,
15 establish libraries, and support the efforts of the Mississippi
16 Freedom Democratic Party to build an integrated political party to
17 challenge the racist policies that barred non-whites from having a
18 voice in state and local government; and

19 Whereas, COFO made another strategic decision to have almost
20 all of the out-of-state volunteers be white in order to draw
21 national attention to the brutality and corruption that dominated
22 Mississippi; and

23 Whereas, These volunteers included over 75 Michiganders, 1,000
24 student volunteers from northern colleges and universities, 254
25 clergy, 169 attorneys, and 50 medical professionals, as well as a
26 staff of over 120 Mississippi residents. All volunteers recognized
27 that they would be facing violent resistance; and

28 Whereas, During the Freedom Summer, two student volunteers and
29 four Mississippi residents were murdered; and

1 Whereas, In addition, 80 volunteers were brutally beaten, 37
2 churches were firebombed or burned, and at least 30 Black homes and
3 businesses were destroyed; and

4 Whereas, Less than 10 percent of the 17,000 African American
5 voters who attempted to register to vote were successful; and

6 Whereas, Freedom Schools in rural counties were attended by
7 30,000 students and over 50 Freedom libraries were established,
8 providing adult literacy classes; and

9 Whereas, In an election held by the Mississippi Freedom
10 Democratic Party, 60,000 state residents voted to select an
11 integrated slate of delegates to challenge the segregated state
12 party delegation at the 1964 Democratic National Convention held in
13 Atlantic City; and

14 Whereas, While Michigan has long been a national leader in
15 voter registration, election turnout, and election security, the
16 fight to secure the right to vote continues to be an ongoing
17 struggle in many other parts of the country; and

18 Whereas, We recognize and honor the Michigan residents who
19 risked their own personal safety to join the 1,500 volunteers
20 during the 1964 Freedom Summer; now, therefore, be it

21 Resolved by the Senate, That the members of this legislative
22 body recognize the 60th anniversary of Freedom Summer. The right of
23 any citizen to vote in local, state, or national elections is
24 essential to the vitality of our democracy.