

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 201 Session of 2017

INTRODUCED BY HAYWOOD, TARTAGLIONE, FARNESE, HUGHES, SABATINA,
STREET, WILLIAMS, BREWSTER, FONTANA, LEACH AND GREENLEAF,
SEPTEMBER 20, 2017

INTRODUCED AND ADOPTED, SEPTEMBER 20, 2017

A RESOLUTION

1 Honoring Fannie Lou Hamer on the 100th anniversary of her birth,
2 October 6, 2017, in recognition of her vast and valiant
3 efforts to ensure the civil rights of minorities, women and
4 low-income families.

5 WHEREAS, Fannie Lou Hamer, née Townsend, was born on October
6 6, 1917, in Montgomery County, Mississippi, the youngest of 20
7 children in a family of cotton sharecroppers; and

8 WHEREAS, When she was two years of age, Ms. Hamer moved with
9 her family to Sunflower County, Mississippi, where she began
10 working the fields at six years of age; and

11 WHEREAS, In 1961, during surgery to remove a tumor, Ms. Hamer
12 was given a hysterectomy without her consent as part of
13 Mississippi's plan at the time to reduce the number of poor
14 African Americans in the state; and

15 WHEREAS, Ms. Hamer is credited with coining the term
16 "Mississippi appendectomy" for the disturbingly common practice
17 of involuntary sterilization imposed mainly on African-American
18 women in the South between the 1920s and 1970s; and

1 WHEREAS, In 1962, Ms. Hamer began to attend nonviolent
2 protests for civil rights and actively help with African-
3 American voter registration efforts in the Jim Crow South,
4 seeing civil rights as not just a political issue but also a
5 religious and moral issue; and

6 WHEREAS, Ms. Hamer dedicated her life to fight for civil
7 rights, first working through the Regional Council of Negro
8 Leadership in her town of Mound Bayou, Mississippi, and later
9 working for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee to
10 participate in and organize acts of civil disobedience to fight
11 racial segregation and injustice; and

12 WHEREAS, Ms. Hamer was threatened, arrested, beaten and even
13 shot at in violent response to her work, though this never
14 deterred her, as evidenced in her response to being among the 18
15 African Americans who attempted to register to vote at the
16 county seat in Indianola: "... what was the point of being
17 scared? The only thing [they] could do was kill me, and it
18 seemed like they'd been trying to do that a little bit at a time
19 since I could remember"; and

20 WHEREAS, Ms. Hamer was fired from her sharecropping
21 plantation in 1962 for participating in civil rights
22 demonstrations and trying to register to vote; and

23 WHEREAS, On June 9, 1963, Ms. Hamer was at a bus stop in
24 Winona, Mississippi, returning from a Student Nonviolent
25 Coordinating Committee conference in South Carolina when she and
26 other voter registration volunteers were violently arrested for
27 attempting to enter a whites-only restaurant and restroom; and

28 WHEREAS, Once in police custody, Ms. Hamer was brutally
29 beaten in a jail cell by police and other prisoners at the
30 command of the officers and denied medical attention for more

1 than two days until her release, causing permanent health
2 damage; and

3 WHEREAS, In 1964, Ms. Hamer helped to found the Mississippi
4 Freedom Democratic Party, which registered 60,000 new African-
5 American voters in Mississippi that year and which opposed
6 Mississippi's exclusively white delegation at the Democratic
7 National Convention; and

8 WHEREAS, The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party sent Ms.
9 Hamer, who served as vice chair, to the 1964 Democratic National
10 Convention, where on December 22 she gave an emotional televised
11 testimony recounting her June 9, 1963, arrest and subsequent
12 beatings; and

13 WHEREAS, Ms. Hamer remained politically active after the
14 Voting Rights Act passed, attempting to run for the Congress of
15 the United States in 1965, as well as helping poor and needy
16 families in her Mississippi community; and

17 WHEREAS, In 1971, Ms. Hamer helped establish the National
18 Women's Political Caucus, which was created to aid women seeking
19 government positions of all kinds, citing a similar struggle
20 shared by women of different backgrounds as a need to help their
21 advancement; and

22 WHEREAS, Ms. Hamer died on March 14, 1977, in Mound Bayou,
23 Mississippi; and

24 WHEREAS, The organizations that Ms. Hamer established to
25 increase business opportunities for minorities and to provide
26 child care and family services in her community continued after
27 her death; and

28 WHEREAS, Ms. Hamer's tombstone in Ruleville, Mississippi, is
29 engraved with her famous words taken from a speech she delivered
30 alongside Malcolm X at a 1964 Mississippi Freedom Democratic

1 Party rally in Harlem, New York: "I am sick and tired of being
2 sick and tired"; therefore be it

3 RESOLVED, That the Senate honor Fannie Lou Hamer on the 100th
4 anniversary of her birth, October 6, 2017, in recognition of her
5 vast and valiant efforts to ensure the civil rights of
6 minorities, women and low-income families.