

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 332 Session of
2022

INTRODUCED BY HAYWOOD, BROWNE, DILLON, HUGHES, FONTANA,
CAPPELLETTI, KANE, KEARNEY, HUTCHINSON, SCHWANK AND
TARTAGLIONE, SEPTEMBER 13, 2022

REFERRED TO RULES AND EXECUTIVE NOMINATIONS, SEPTEMBER 13, 2022

A RESOLUTION

1 Honoring Fannie Lou Hamer on the anniversary of her 105th
2 birthday in recognition of her vast and valiant efforts to
3 ensure the civil rights of minorities, women and low-income
4 families.

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

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

11 WHEREAS, In 1961, during a surgery to remove a tumor, Ms.
12 Hamer 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, coining the term "Mississippi
15 appendectomy" for the disturbingly common involuntary
16 sterilization of African-American women in the South during the
17 1960s; and

18 WHEREAS, Ms. Hamer began attending nonviolent protests for

1 civil rights in 1962 and began actively helping with African-
2 American voter registration efforts in the Jim Crow South,
3 seeing civil rights not just as a political issue, but a
4 religious and moral issue; and

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

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

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

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

27 WHEREAS, Once in police custody, Ms. Hamer was brutally
28 beaten in a jail cell by police and other prisoners at the
29 command of the officers and denied medical attention for more
30 than two days until her release, causing permanent health

1 damage; and

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

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

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

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

21 WHEREAS, Ms. Hamer was laid to rest on March 14, 1977, in
22 Mound Bayou, Mississippi, but the organizations she established
23 to increase business opportunities for minorities and to provide
24 child care and family services in her community lived on; and

25 WHEREAS, Ms. Hamer's tombstone in Ruleville, Mississippi, is
26 engraved with her famous words taken from a speech that she
27 delivered alongside Malcolm X at a 1964 Mississippi Freedom
28 Democratic Party rally in Harlem: "I am sick and tired of being
29 sick and tired"; therefore be it

30 RESOLVED, That the Senate honor Fannie Lou Hamer on the

1 anniversary of her 105th birthday in recognition of her vast and
2 valiant efforts to ensure the civil rights of minorities, women
3 and low-income families.