
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 389 Session of
2020

INTRODUCED BY HAYWOOD, IOVINO, FONTANA, COSTA, TARTAGLIONE,
STEFANO AND DINNIMAN, OCTOBER 2, 2020

REFERRED TO RULES AND EXECUTIVE NOMINATIONS, OCTOBER 2, 2020

A RESOLUTION

1 Honoring Fannie Lou Hamer on her 103rd birthday in recognition
2 of her vast and valiant efforts to ensure the civil rights of
3 minorities, women and low-income families.

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

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

10 WHEREAS, In 1961, during a surgery to remove a tumor, Ms.
11 Hamer was given a hysterectomy without her consent as part of
12 Mississippi's plan at the time to reduce the number of poor
13 African Americans in the state, coining the term "Mississippi
14 appendectomy" for the disturbingly common involuntary
15 sterilization of African-American women in the South during the
16 1960s; and

17 WHEREAS, Ms. Hamer began attending nonviolent protests for
18 civil rights in 1962 and began actively helping with African-

1 American voter registration efforts in the Jim Crow South,
2 seeing civil rights not just as a political issue, but a
3 religious and moral issue; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

29 RESOLVED, That the Senate honor Fannie Lou Hamer on her 103rd
30 birthday in recognition of her vast and valiant efforts to

- 1 ensure the civil rights of minorities, women and low-income
- 2 families.