

**No. R-430. House concurrent resolution designating April as Fair Housing Month in Vermont.**

(H.C.R.308)

Offered by: Representatives Head of South Burlington, Ram of Burlington, Baker of West Rutland, Moran of Wardsboro, Olsen of Jamaica, Savage of Swanton, South of St. Johnsbury and Stevens of Waterbury

Whereas, the right to dwell wherever any individual wishes without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, or sex was not historically enshrined in federal law, and

Whereas, for generations, millions of Americans were denied the housing of their choice because of one of these factors, and

Whereas, despite the United States Supreme Court's prohibition in 1948 of judicial enforcement of racially, religiously, or ethnically restrictive covenants in the case of Shelley v. Kraemer, discriminatory housing policies in neighborhoods or even entire communities continued to be legal, only if privately enforced, and

Whereas, in the middle 1960s, following Congress's passage of both the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, housing discrimination nevertheless remained a barrier in both the rental and sales markets, and

Whereas, the assassination of civil rights leader Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on April 4, 1968, and the riots that followed in its wake proved the catalyst that finally persuaded Congress of the necessity to enact federal fair housing legislation, and

Whereas, Congress responded with unusual haste to President Johnson's urgent appeal, and, within days, on April 11, 1968, the President signed the Civil Rights Act of 1968, Title VIII of which is known as the Fair Housing Act, and

Whereas, the legislative breakthrough achieved in this act began a process of guaranteeing that individuals could rent or purchase a home without regard to their race, color, religion, or gender, and, in 1988, the federal act was amended to include the presence of minor children or disabilities as new protected categories, and

Whereas, in observance of the signing of the Fair Housing Act of 1968, many jurisdictions are designating April as Fair Housing Month in order both to remember the passage of this historic legislation and to renew the commitment to fair and open housing for all Americans, and

Whereas, the Vermont fair housing law affords additional protections to individuals based on their source of income and sexual orientation, and

Whereas, in 2010, economic conditions have increased the challenges that many Vermonters face in finding affordable quality housing, and observing the message of Fair Housing Month assumes an increased and immediate importance, and

Whereas, preliminary figures from the 2010 statewide one-day "Point in Time" homeless count indicate that the number of individuals without a permanent residence has doubled, and

Whereas, the latest report from the National Low Income Housing Coalition shows that Vermont is the 15th most expensive state in the nation for renters, and even more problematic, rural Vermont ranks in the top 10 most expensive rural areas for renters in the United States, and

Whereas, Fair Housing Month serves as a reminder to everyone that the barriers that low income Vermonters and other protected groups encounter in finding a place to live must be at the forefront of our concerns, now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly designates April as Fair Housing Month in Vermont, and be it further

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Vermont Human Rights Commission.