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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, John Robert Lewis was born to Willie Mae (Carter) and Eddie Lewis near Troy, Alabama on February 21, 1940; as a child, he was affectionately known as "Preacher" and insisted on attending school daily, defying his parents' instructions to work the family farm, establishing his lifelong commitment to education and enlightenment; and

8

WHEREAS, As a high school student, John Lewis intensely followed the progress of the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955 and 1956; inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., he preached his first public sermon, entitled "A Praying Mother", at Macedonia Baptist Church in Troy, Alabama on February 16, 1956; later that year, he joined the NAACP; and

14

WHEREAS, While a student at the American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville, Tennessee, John Lewis was a founding member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), organizing sit-ins at segregated lunch counters and pushing Nashville to become the first major city in the South to begin the desegregation of public facilities; after graduating in 1961, he was subsequently ordained as a Baptist minister; and

22

WHEREAS, In 1961, John Lewis became one of the 13 original

1 Freedom Riders, challenging segregated interstate travel
2 throughout the South; two years later, at just 23 years old, he
3 helped organize the 1963 March on Washington, where he
4 witnessed Dr. King deliver his famous "I Have a Dream" speech;
5 that same year, as chair of the SNCC, he proceeded to move to
6 Atlanta, Georgia; and

7 WHEREAS, John Lewis led demonstrations against racially
8 segregated hotels, restrooms, swimming pools, and public
9 parks, for which he was brutally beaten, left unconscious in
10 his own blood, and arrested 40 times, spending countless
11 nights in county jails and 37 days in Parchman Penitentiary;
12 and

13 WHEREAS, On March 7, 1965, on what would become known as
14 Bloody Sunday, John Lewis led 600 peaceful demonstrators who
15 were demanding their right to vote while marching across the
16 Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama; he and demonstrators
17 were met with violence and police brutality, and he suffered a
18 fractured skull; and

19 WHEREAS, After televised images of the Bloody Sunday
20 violence in Selma shocked the conscience of the United States,
21 President Lyndon B. Johnson called for equal voting rights
22 legislation before a joint session of Congress, which evolved
23 into his signing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (52 U.S.C.

1 10301 et seq.) on August 6, 1965; and

2 WHEREAS, John Lewis married Lillian Miles on December 21,
3 1968, and she was his best friend, closest ally, and most
4 steadfast supporter until her death on December 31, 2012; and

5 WHEREAS, In 1970, John Lewis became director of the Voter
6 Education Project, which added nearly 4,000,000 minority
7 voters to the voter rolls, changing the political landscape of
8 the United States forever; and

9 WHEREAS, In 1977, John Lewis was appointed by President
10 Jimmy Carter to direct more than 250,000 volunteers of ACTION,
11 which was then a federal volunteer agency; and

12 WHEREAS, In 1981, John Lewis won elected office for the
13 first time as an at-large councilman on the Atlanta City
14 Council, where he was a powerful advocate for ethics and
15 neighborhood preservation; and

16 WHEREAS, In 1982, John Lewis worked with the American
17 Jewish Committee to found the Atlanta Black-Jewish Coalition,
18 part of his decades-long friendship and alliance with the
19 Jewish community of Georgia, which later led to the
20 establishment of the Congressional Black-Jewish caucus; and

1 WHEREAS, In 1986, John Lewis became the second African
2 American to represent Georgia in the United States Congress
3 since Reconstruction, ultimately serving in Congress for over
4 three decades; during his tenure, he fought for the passage of
5 the Civil Rights Act of 1991 (Public Law 102-166; 105 Stat.
6 1071), which was signed into law by President George H.W.
7 Bush, secured authorization for construction of the National
8 Museum of African American History and Culture on the National
9 Mall in Washington, D.C. in 2003, and introduced the Emmett
10 Till Unsolved Civil Rights Crime Act of 2007 (28 U.S.C. 509
11 note; Public Law 110-344) to investigate unsolved civil rights
12 crimes, which was signed into law by President George W. Bush
13 in 2008; and

14 WHEREAS, John Lewis was the recipient of a number of
15 accolades, including being awarded the John F. Kennedy Library
16 Foundation Profile in Courage Award for his extraordinary
17 courage, leadership, and commitment to civil rights in 2001
18 and receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest
19 civilian honor in the United States, by President Barack Obama
20 in 2011; and

21 WHEREAS, On July 17, 2020, John Lewis passed away,
22 devastating his family, his staff, the City of Atlanta, the
23 State of Georgia, and the people of the United States, who
24 united to honor his monumental legacy of hard work and

1 self-sacrifice in the pursuit of liberty and justice for all;
2 and

3 WHEREAS, John Lewis was known as the "conscience of the
4 Congress" for his relentless pursuit of justice, his
5 unflinching commitment to building a society without poverty,
6 racism, or violence, and his willingness to make what he
7 called "good trouble, necessary trouble" to confront acts of
8 injustice; therefore, be it

9 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
10 HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
11 we declare February 21, 2024 as John Lewis Day in the State of
12 Illinois to honor the life and legacy of American hero and
13 civil rights leader John Robert Lewis.