

2026 Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 35

BY REPRESENTATIVE WALTERS

A RESOLUTION

To express the condolences of the House of Representatives on the death of Bernard LaFayette, Jr.

WHEREAS, it is with immense sadness and profound regret that the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana has learned of the passing of Bernard LaFayette, Jr.; and

WHEREAS, Bernard LaFayette, Jr., was born on July 29, 1940, in Tampa, Florida, and grew up in Tampa and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, Dr. LaFayette was a student at the American Baptist Theological Seminary during the Freedom Rides of 1961 and served as a leader in both the Nashville Student Movement and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee; and

WHEREAS, Dr. LaFayette was one of twenty-one student Freedom Riders who were attacked during a demonstration at the Montgomery Greyhound Bus Station on May 20, 1961; after the attack, he traveled to Jackson, Mississippi, where he was arrested on a breach-of-the-peace charge and spent nearly forty days in Parchman Prison; and

WHEREAS, after his release from prison, Dr. LaFayette remained in Jackson to recruit new Freedom Riders and organize the Jackson Nonviolent Movement; he later joined the staff of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and worked on numerous campaigns, including Selma, from 1963 to 1965; and

WHEREAS, Dr. LaFayette served as the national coordinator for the Poor People's Campaign in 1968; during his final conversation with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., he was charged to "institutionalize and internationalize nonviolence", and this challenge shaped his life as an activist, minister, educator, lecturer, and authority on Kingian Nonviolence; and

WHEREAS, Dr. LaFayette attended the Boston University School of Law and Harvard University; he completed a master of education degree from Harvard in 1972 and a doctor of education degree in 1974; he taught at numerous colleges and universities and served as the senior scholar in residence at the Candler Divinity School at Emory University; and

WHEREAS, Dr. LaFayette served as president of American Baptist College and as chair of the national board of the SCLC; in 2013, he published a memoir entitled *In Peace and Freedom: My Journey in Selma*; and

WHEREAS, Dr. LaFayette received numerous awards and honors, including the Mahatma Gandhi International Award for Reconciliation and Peace in 2016; he is featured in the book *The Children* and in numerous documentaries, including *When I Get Grown: The Story of How Bernard LaFayette, Jr. Became a Freedom Rider*; and

WHEREAS, Bernard LaFayette, Jr., was married to the former Kate Bulls and was the father of two sons and grandfather of seven grandchildren; he will be deeply missed, but his legacy of service during the civil rights movement and to social justice causes across the nation shall live on in perpetuity in the hearts and minds of those who were privileged to have known him.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby express heartfelt condolences on the death of Bernard LaFayette, Jr.; does hereby extend enduring appreciation for his contributions to the civil rights movement in the United States; and does hereby extend sincere wishes that his family, friends, and loved ones find comfort in their shared memories of his beautiful life.

---

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES