



HR0730

LRB104 21174 LAW 35588 r

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of
3 Representatives are saddened to learn of the death of civil
4 rights leader Dr. Bernard LaFayette Jr., who passed away on
5 March 5, 2026; and

6 WHEREAS, Dr. LaFayette played a pivotal role in civil
7 rights and voting activism in the 1960s and beyond; and

8 WHEREAS, Dr. LaFayette's activism began at age 12, when he
9 joined the NAACP after watching the abuse his grandmother
10 endured on a segregated bus; and

11 WHEREAS, Dr. LaFayette helped found the Student Nonviolent
12 Coordinating Committee at age 19 in 1960, continuing his
13 activism past high school; and

14 WHEREAS, Dr. LaFayette roomed with civil rights
15 trailblazer and future U.S. Representative John Lewis while
16 attending American Baptist Theological Seminary, known today
17 as American Baptist College, where the pair joined the Freedom
18 Riders shortly thereafter, becoming two of more than 300
19 Freedom Riders beaten and taken to Parchman Prison, also known
20 as Mississippi State Penitentiary, in 1961; and

1 WHEREAS, Dr. LaFayette was named director of the Alabama
2 Voter Registration Campaign at age 22 in 1963; that same year,
3 he survived an assassination attempt, imploring an armed
4 neighbor trying to intervene to not shoot his attempted
5 assassin, a testament to his deep belief in nonviolence; and

6 WHEREAS, Dr. LaFayette began expanding his activism to
7 Illinois when he was recruited to the American Friends Service
8 Committee in Chicago in 1964; and

9 WHEREAS, Dr. LaFayette was in Chicago when hundreds of
10 protesters were attacked in Selma, Alabama during Bloody
11 Sunday in 1965; undeterred, he organized a group to bus from
12 Chicago to Selma to continue protesting a few weeks later; and

13 WHEREAS, Dr. LaFayette joined the Chicago Freedom
14 Movement's Action Committee in 1966, working to end slums and
15 improve housing opportunities for Black Americans; and

16 WHEREAS, Dr. LaFayette was appointed as director of Dr.
17 Martin Luther King Jr.'s Poor People's Campaign in 1968
18 shortly before Dr. King's assassination; he spent time with
19 Dr. King on the morning of his assassination, whose last words
20 to him were about institutionalizing and internationalizing
21 nonviolence, which became the focus of his life's work; and

1 WHEREAS, Upon Dr. King's assassination, Dr. LaFayette
2 returned to American Baptist Theological Seminary, where he
3 received his bachelor's degree, and he proceeded to earn his
4 Master and Doctor of Education from Harvard University; and

5 WHEREAS, Dr. LaFayette held countless leadership positions
6 throughout his career, including serving as national program
7 director for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference,
8 director of Peace and Justice in Latin America, and dean of the
9 graduate school at Alabama State University; no matter his
10 position, he continued his nonviolent teachings, research, and
11 activism across many platforms nationwide and internationally;
12 and

13 WHEREAS, Dr. LaFayette will be remembered for fighting for
14 equity and peaceful protest as part of his lifelong commitment
15 to civil rights and nonviolence; therefore, be it

16 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
17 HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
18 we mourn the passing of civil rights leader Dr. Bernard
19 LaFayette Jr. and extend our sincere condolences to his
20 family, friends, and all who knew and loved him; and be it
21 further

22 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be

1 presented to the family of Dr. LaFayette as an expression of
2 our deepest sympathy.