



Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County, TN

Legislation Text

File #: RS2021-1161, **Version:** 1

A resolution honoring the life of Dr. Ernest “Rip” Patton.

WHEREAS, Ernest “Rip” Patton was born in 1940 in Nashville, Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, from a young age, Patton observed the harsh effects of racial segregation in his neighborhood and vowed to be an agent of change; and

WHEREAS, Patton attended Pearl High School and began his studies at Tennessee State University (then Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial University) in 1960, where he studied music. However, he soon became involved in the Nashville branch of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and studied under Rev. James Lawson; and

WHEREAS, Patton participated in the Nashville student movement through sit-ins, stand-ins, and boycotts. Patton, along with other students, participated in the Nashville nonviolent, direct action campaign; and

WHEREAS, he was one of 3,000 students who marched to the Nashville courthouse in a silent protest to confront Mayor Ben West, and helped to successfully integrate downtown lunch counters by the end of 1960; and

WHEREAS, as a twenty-one-year-old student, Patton traveled to Montgomery, Alabama, to provide assistance to the Freedom Riders. Patton officially joined the Freedom Riders on May 24, 1961, in the Greyhound bus traveling from Nashville to Jackson, Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, Patton was arrested on this Freedom Ride to Jackson. Patton, along with three hundred other African Americans, were taken to Mississippi State Penitentiary; and

WHEREAS, because of his participation in the Freedom Rides, Patton was one of fourteen students expelled from Tennessee State University. He never finished his degree, but worked various jobs including as a jazz musician and a long distance truck driver; and

WHEREAS, he served as a member of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. He also was a member of The Nashville Quartet, whose music now belongs to the Smithsonian Folkways collection; and

WHEREAS, in 2008, Tennessee State University granted honorary doctoral degrees to the fourteen students expelled in 1961, including Patton. Patton was also presented with an honorary doctor of laws degree from Stetson University in 2010; and

WHEREAS, on July 17, 2021, Patton along with other civil rights icons were presented a key to the city of Nashville by Mayor John Cooper for their courage and leadership in the Nashville Civil Rights Reform; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and proper that the Metropolitan Council recognize the contributions of Dr. Ernest “Rip” Patton to the Civil Rights Movement in Nashville and across the country.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY:

Section 1. The Metropolitan County Council hereby goes on record as honoring the life of Nashville Civil

Rights advocate and Freedom Rider Dr. Ernest "Rip" Patton.

Section 2. This Resolution shall take effect from and after its adoption, the welfare of The Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County requiring it.