



# Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County, TN

## Legislation Text

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**File #:** RS2021-931, **Version:** 1

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A resolution honoring the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Freedom Riders.

WHEREAS, this year marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Freedom Riders, a group of civil rights activists who rode buses to challenge segregation across the southern United States; and

WHEREAS, the Freedom Riders included John Lewis, Diane Nash, C.T. Vivian, Rev. James Lawson, James Farmer, Bernard Lafayette, James Bevel, William Harbour, Joan Trumpauer Mulholland, and James Zwerg, among many others; and

WHEREAS, the first Freedom Riders left Washington, D.C. on May 4, 1961. Activists boarded a Greyhound bus headed across the South, scheduled to end at a civil rights rally in New Orleans, Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, the Freedom Riders were a diverse group of volunteers and activists, from different states, socio-economic classes, and racial backgrounds. Many of the Freedom Riders were sponsored by Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC); and

WHEREAS, the Freedom Riders' Greyhound bus was firebombed in Anniston, Alabama, while another group of that first wave of riders was attacked in Birmingham, Alabama; and

WHEREAS, despite the incredible violence the Riders encountered, they intended to continue their journey. However, when they arrived at their bus terminal, drivers refused to take the Freedom Riders anywhere. The Riders were able to take a flight from Birmingham to New Orleans. Despite the danger the Riders faced, they recognized that their efforts achieved their purpose of calling attention to the cause of civil rights; and

WHEREAS, in Nashville, Diane Nash, a student at Fisk University, sought to continue the Freedom Rides and pushed to find replacements. On May 17, ten students involved in the Nashville Student Movement took a bus to Birmingham, and were soon arrested and taken back to the Tennessee state line; and

WHEREAS, despite this, they continued their ride. A total of 22 students, 21 from Nashville, returned to Birmingham, Alabama and subsequently rode on to Montgomery, Alabama where they were assaulted by a vicious mob of hundreds; and

WHEREAS, John Seigenthaler, who was sent by U.S. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy to attempt to control the violence, was beaten unconscious by the mob in Montgomery; and

WHEREAS, an additional 27 students and adults, 13 from Nashville, rode the first two buses to Jackson, Mississippi on May 24<sup>th</sup>, where officials in the city decided the Riders would be arrested, but protected from mob violence; and

WHEREAS, Nashville became a pivotal location for recruiting and training riders throughout the summer of 1961; and

WHEREAS, in the fall of 1961, the Interstate Commerce Commission issued regulations prohibiting segregation in interstate transit terminals - a win for the Freedom Riders, and an inspiration for subsequent civil rights campaigns; and

WHEREAS, through their fearless journeys, the Freedom Riders sent a resounding message to the rest of America that desegregation was a moral imperative; creating a spirit that motivated and mobilized the next

generation of civil rights leaders and inspired many of those involved to become lifelong activists, organizers, and leaders in the civil rights movement; and

WHEREAS, this momentous event calls upon all citizens of Nashville to honor the Freedom Riders and all those who struggled for equal rights and the core human values of truth, love, and non-violence; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and proper that the Metropolitan Council recognize the 60th Anniversary of the Freedom Riders.

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

Section 1. The Metropolitan Council hereby goes on record as recognizing the 60th Anniversary of the Freedom Riders of 1961.

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.