**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO HONOR THE ALLENDALE COUNTY SUMMER COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION AND POLITICAL EDUCATION PROJECT (SCOPE) OF 1965 AND THE “ALLENDALE FIVE,” SCOPE PARTICIPANTS WHO WERE JAILED, TRIED, AND CONVICTED FOR ATTEMPTING TO REGISTER TO VOTE.

Whereas, the Summer Community Organization and Political Education Project (SCOPE), part of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) under the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was a bold voter‑registration Civil Rights initiative conducted from 1965 to 1966 in one hundred twenty counties in six Southern states; and

Whereas, its goals included preparing formerly disenfranchised African Americans for voting, and, if necessary, for organizing street demonstrations to help put political pressure on Congress, should the proposed Voting Rights Bill of 1965 be met with congressional resistance and stalling, or even filibuster, by die‑hard segregationist forces; and

Whereas, SCOPE took place during the summer of 1965, growing out of three forces: the SCLC’s participation in the Voter Education Project, the momentum following the Selma‑to‑Montgomery March, and the SCLC’s desire to highlight the voter‑registration process for blacks while the Voting Rights Act was pending before Congress. SCOPE was also inspired by the 1964 Freedom Summer, a Council of Federated Organizations initiative that mobilized hundreds of white college students to work in the South against segregation and black disenfranchisement; and

Whereas, despite promises that the Voting Rights Act would be enacted by June 1965, SCOPE began that summer as the bill wended its way through Congress. Its three objectives were local recruitment and community grass‑roots organization, voter registration, and political education. Over 1,200 SCOPE workers, including six hundred fifty college students from across the nation, one hundred fifty SCLC staff members, and four hundred local volunteers, served in six Southern states to register African Americans to vote. The students lived with African‑American families, who were paid fifteen dollars a week for the students’ room and board, which barely covered expenses; and

Whereas, in Allendale County, many SCOPE participants were arrested on several occasions after attempting to register to vote at the County Courthouse. Five of those arrested, known as the “Allendale Five,” were charged with disorderly conduct, inciting a riot, and other charges. These five were indicted, tried, and convicted by an all‑white jury, sentenced to one‑year terms, and fined one hundred dollars; and

Whereas, the sentences and fines of the Allendale Five, Bernard Brown, Maggie Gadson (deceased), Willa Marian Jennings, Larry O’Neal Priester, and Cleo Smokes (deceased), were commuted by the Johnson Administration via the Justice Department prior to the President’s signing of the Voting Rights Act into law on August 6, 1965; and

Whereas, the courage of these five Civil Rights heroes, as well as that of more than five hundred other Allendale County citizens who attempted to register to vote at the county courthouse during this period, is worthy of recognition and praise. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, honor the Allendale County Summer Community Organization and Political Education Project (SCOPE) of 1965 and the “Allendale Five,” SCOPE participants who were jailed, tried, and convicted for attempting to register to vote.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be provided to Bernard Brown, Willa Marian Jennings, Larry O’Neal Priester, and to the families of Maggie Gadson and Cleo Smokes.

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