

1       HR185  
2       176082-1  
3       By Representatives Coleman, Alexander, Carns, Robinson, South,  
4       Rogers, Drake, Moore (M), Treadaway, Scott, Farley, Givan,  
5       Mooney, Garrett, Williams (JD), Wadsworth, Faulkner and Todd  
6       RFD: Rules  
7       First Read: 22-MAR-16

8           URGING CONGRESS TO ENACT LEGISLATION TO ESTABLISH  
9 THE BIRMINGHAM CIVIL RIGHTS DISTRICT AS A NATIONAL HISTORIC  
10 PARK AS PART OF THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM.  
11

12           WHEREAS, the Birmingham Civil Rights district is an  
13 area of downtown Birmingham where many significant events in  
14 the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s took  
15 place; and

16           WHEREAS, many sites in this area are listed on the  
17 National Register of Historic Places, including the A.G.  
18 Gaston Motel, Kelly Ingram Park, 16th Street Baptist Church,  
19 Bethel Baptist Church, the 4th Avenue Historic District, and  
20 the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute; and

21           WHEREAS, despite some change in the early 1950s, in  
22 the 1960s, Birmingham was regarded as one of the most  
23 segregated cities in the South, including its parks, pools,  
24 playgrounds, hotels, theaters, elevators, public housing, and  
25 employment and with segregation remaining firmly in place and  
26 violence, including some 60 bombings from 1945 to 1963, was  
27 frequently used to maintain the status quo; and

1           WHEREAS, in 1963, Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth  
2 requested that the Southern Christian Leadership Conference  
3 (SCLC) make the City of Birmingham the epicenter for an  
4 ambitious new Civil Rights campaign; "Project C," Project  
5 Confrontation, was designed to eliminate segregation through  
6 mass protests, marches, and sit-ins; and

7           WHEREAS, the historic A.G. Gaston Motel was  
8 headquarters for Project C, a campaign that began on April 6,  
9 1963, when police arrested 45 protestors who marched from the  
10 A.G. Gaston Motel to downtown Birmingham; and

11           WHEREAS, phase two of Project C began in May of  
12 1963, with a series of mass protests in which 900 Black youth  
13 were arrested by police, overwhelming the capacity of the  
14 city's jails; and

15           WHEREAS, in May 1963, youth protestors in Kelly  
16 Ingram Park were violently dispersed by police dogs and  
17 powerful water cannons; images of the brutal attack spread  
18 across the country, shocking the conscience of the nation and  
19 the world and forcing the Birmingham business community and  
20 local leaders to agree to release the peaceful protestors,  
21 integrate lunch counters, and begin hiring African Americans;  
22 and

23           WHEREAS, the September 15, 1963, bombing of the 16th  
24 Street Baptist Church violently killed Addie Mae Collins,  
25 Carole Robinson, Cynthia Wesley, and Denise McNair, and  
26 injured 22 other church members and left significant damage to  
27 the church; and

1           WHEREAS, located just south of 16th Street Baptist  
2 Church is the 4th Avenue Historic District, the center for  
3 Black-owned businesses which served Black customers during the  
4 city's long period of enforced segregation; and

5           WHEREAS, also located in Birmingham is Bethel  
6 Baptist Church which was led by Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth;  
7 Bethel served as the headquarters for the Alabama Christian  
8 Movement for Human Rights from 1956 to 1961 and was a place of  
9 refuge for displaced and injured members of the 1961 Freedom  
10 Ride, and the target of multiple bombings in the 1950s and  
11 1960s; and

12           WHEREAS, Bethel Baptist Church, as well as many  
13 other Birmingham churches, such as the New Pilgrim Baptist  
14 Church, hosted mass meetings leading up to many of the civil  
15 rights marches throughout the city; and

16           WHEREAS, the students and faculty of Miles College,  
17 a historically Black college in the Birmingham area,  
18 supplemented the efforts of the local churches; and

19           WHEREAS, decades after the Civil Rights Movement,  
20 the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute opened its doors in  
21 1992; the institute stands at the center of the civil rights  
22 historic district, acting as a hub for children, students,  
23 adults, and scholars who come to Birmingham to learn about the  
24 American Civil Rights Movement; and

25           WHEREAS, the 27,000 square foot permanent gallery  
26 within the institute takes its visitors back to the 1950s when  
27 Birmingham was deeply segregated; it serves more than 140,000

1 individuals each year, encouraging new generations to examine  
2 our country's civil rights history, as well as issues such as  
3 equality and justice; and

4 WHEREAS, the preservation, historic interpretation,  
5 and management of the Birmingham Civil Rights District, truly  
6 a national civil rights historic treasure, will require the  
7 collaboration of federal and municipal entities, as well as  
8 community organizations to establish the district as a  
9 national historic park; now therefore,

10 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF  
11 THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA, That we urge Congress to enact  
12 legislation to establish the Birmingham Civil Rights District  
13 as a National Historic Park as part of the National Park  
14 System.

15 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this  
16 resolution be provided to the members of the Alabama  
17 Congressional delegation for further distribution to the  
18 members of Congress as an indication of our strong support for  
19 the action urged by this resolution.