

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 87

Designating April 13, in 2026 and in each succeeding year, as a Day of Remembrance for Victims of Lynching in Virginia.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 11, 2026

Agreed to by the Senate, March 3, 2026

WHEREAS, throughout America's history of slavery, segregation, and inequality, thousands of Black Americans were lynched across America, particularly throughout the southern United States, to perpetuate racial inequality and white supremacy and to terrorize Black communities; and

WHEREAS, during Reconstruction, the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution were ratified, abolishing slavery, granting citizenship to any person born or naturalized in the United States, and guaranteeing the rights to due process of law and equal protection under the law and the right to vote for Black men; and

WHEREAS, in outright defiance of the Reconstruction Amendments, people across the nation acted outside of the law, deliberately, violently, and brutally, against Black citizens in retribution for alleged or invented crimes and faced few or no consequences; and

WHEREAS, the Equal Justice Initiative has documented more than 4,000 lynchings that took place throughout the South between 1877 and 1950, over 80 of which took place in Virginia; other scholarship documents more than 100 lynchings in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, Black men, women, and children lived in fear that their lives and the lives of loved ones could end violently at any time and in any place; and

WHEREAS, lynchings were often widely known and publicly attended; some were witnessed by crowds that numbered in the thousands, reflecting community acceptance, and many leaders and authorities and much of society denied and enabled the illegal and horrific nature of the acts; and

WHEREAS, *Richmond Planet* editor John Mitchell, Jr., exposed lynchings in Virginia as they occurred and led the state's anti-lynching campaign; however, despite his efforts and other accounts, historians believe still more lynchings remain undocumented; and

WHEREAS, at the urging of Norfolk Virginia-Pilot editor Louis Isaac Jaffe and other anti-lynching activists, and to curtail mob violence in Virginia, the General Assembly passed an anti-lynching measure that was signed into law on March 14, 1928, declaring lynching a state crime; and

WHEREAS, the extreme racial animus, violence, and terror embodied in the act of lynching did not die with the criminalization of the act, and few, if any, prosecutions occurred under the measure; and

WHEREAS, the legacy of racism that outlived slavery, enabled the rise and acceptance of lynching, facilitated segregation and disenfranchisement, and denied education and civil rights to Black citizens has yet to be uprooted in the Commonwealth, the South, and the nation, and this dark and shameful chapter of American history must be understood, acknowledged, and fully documented and the seemingly irreparable breach mended; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, the General Assembly unanimously passed House Joint Resolution No. 655 and Senate Joint Resolution No. 297, acknowledging with profound regret the existence and acceptance of lynching within the Commonwealth, making Virginia the first state in the nation to formally acknowledge this painful chapter of history; and

WHEREAS, House Joint Resolution No. 655 and Senate Joint Resolution No. 297 charged the Virginia Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission with the task of bringing awareness and recognition of this history to communities across the state, that such awareness might contribute to the process of healing and reconciliation in Virginia's still-wounded communities and for families and descendants affected by lynchings; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly designate April 13, in 2026 and in each succeeding year, as a Day of Remembrance for Victims of Lynching in Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit a copy of this resolution to the Virginia Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission, requesting that it further disseminate copies of this resolution to its constituents so that they may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter; and, be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates post the designation of this day on the General Assembly's website.