

MICHIGAN SENATE

Senate Resolution No. 36

Offered by Senators Chang, Bayer, Geiss and Santana

A RESOLUTION TO COMMEMORATE APRIL 23-30, 2023, AS BLACK APRIL MEMORIAL WEEK

WHEREAS, April 30, 2023, marks the 48th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War and the start of the eventual exodus of several million Vietnamese out of Vietnam after South Vietnam’s capital of Saigon fell to the communists on April 30, 1975; and

WHEREAS, For many Vietnam and Vietnam-era veterans who were directly involved in the war, and Vietnamese Americans who have settled in the United States, the Vietnam War was a tragedy full of great suffering and the loss of American, Vietnamese, and Southeast Asian lives; and

WHEREAS, Over 58,000 people were killed and 304,000 were wounded out of the 2.59 million Americans who served in the Vietnam War. One out of every ten Americans who served in Vietnam became a casualty of war; and

WHEREAS, South Vietnamese armed forces lost 275,000 soldiers and many more were wounded, along with an unknown number of Vietnamese civilian casualties; and

WHEREAS, During the American evacuation of Saigon, the first wave of 135,000 Vietnamese who were mostly military officers and their families, took temporary shelter through several international refugee camps at Camp Pendleton in San Diego, California, Fort Chaffee in Arkansas, and Indiantown Gap in Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, Starting in 1977 and lasting through the mid-1980s, a second wave of Vietnamese refugees comprised mostly of “boat people” began leaving Vietnam. Seeing no future under communism, nearly 800,000 boat people risked their lives in small, dangerous boats to travel to resettlement camps in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines before eventually resettling in the United States. The Red Cross estimated that during that time, at least 300,000 Vietnamese died on the high seas while trying to escape communism; and

WHEREAS, After 1985, a third wave of Vietnamese refugees came to the United States under the Orderly Departure Program; and

WHEREAS, In 1988, Congress passed the Operation Homecoming Act, a program allowing approximately 80,000 Amerasian children (offspring of GI fathers and Vietnamese mothers) to come to America; and

WHEREAS, By 1990, the fourth wave of Vietnamese refugees began arriving in the United States under the Humanitarian Operation, and today, more than 1.7 million Vietnamese immigrants reside in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Census data shows that foreign-born Vietnamese entering the United States in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s have seen an increase in terms of English proficiency, proportion of college graduates, the number of owner-occupied housing, family median income, and naturalization; and

WHEREAS, Over the years, Vietnamese immigrants have overcome social, economic, and language barriers of unforeseen magnitude to grow and become the most assimilated along civic dimensions out of any large group in America; and

WHEREAS, Through emphasis on intense study, Vietnamese Americans have reached the pinnacles of American success in a variety of fields including business and entrepreneurship, science and technology, space travel, medicine, the executive branch of the United States government, politics, the United States military, the United States judicial system, professional sports, and, most recently, cultural icon status in cooking, modeling, acting, and comedy; and

WHEREAS, In order to serve their community and prosper in America, Vietnamese Americans formed well-established and thriving Vietnamese American commercial districts throughout the United States, including an enclave in southeast Oakland County and in west Michigan; and

WHEREAS, More than 25,276 Vietnamese now live in Michigan; and

WHEREAS, We must teach our children and future generations the important lessons from the Vietnam War, including how the plight of the Vietnamese refugees following the end of war is a powerful example of the values of freedom and democracy; and

WHEREAS, Refugees and immigrants from the former Republic of Vietnam, who came to the United States and settled as free Vietnamese Americans, are honored and remembered for their sacrifices of freedom, human rights, and for their ongoing contributions to our democratic society; and

WHEREAS, The Vietnamese Heritage and Freedom flag, which is yellow with three horizontal red stripes, is the only symbol that can unite most Vietnamese around the world and bring them together, showing the aspiration for freedom and democracy in their homeland; and

WHEREAS, Although united in sorrow as they commemorate April 30, 2023, as Black April, an occasion to reflect on the sacrifices of the past, Vietnamese American communities throughout Michigan consider Black April a memorial and remembrance of the resilience of the Vietnamese people; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate, That the members of this legislative body commemorate April 23-30, 2023, as Black April Memorial Week. We recognize this special time for Michiganians to honor the tragedy of the suffering and countless lives lost during the Vietnam War era, while also paying tribute to those lives lost by human rights and freedom to the people of Vietnam.

Adopted by the Senate, April 26, 2023.


Secretary of the Senate