

By: Representative Steele

HOUSE RESOLUTION

TO RECOGNIZE MONDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2025, AS DAISY GATSON BATES DAY AND ALSO PRESIDENT'S DAY, AND TO HONOR DAISY GATSON BATES FOR HER CONTRIBUTIONS TO ARKANSAS, THE NATION, AND THE WORLD, NOW MEMORIALIZED IN THE DISPLAY OF HER STATUE AT THE NATIONAL STATUARY HALL COLLECTION IN THE UNITED STATES CAPITOL.

Subtitle

TO RECOGNIZE MONDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2025, AS DAISY GATSON BATES DAY, AND TO HONOR DAISY GATSON BATES FOR HER CONTRIBUTIONS TO ARKANSAS, THE NATION, AND THE WORLD, NOW MEMORIALIZED IN THE DISPLAY OF HER STATUE IN THE UNITED STATES CAPITOL.

WHEREAS, Daisy Gatson Bates Day is observed annually in the State of Arkansas on the same day as President's Day to honor the life of Daisy Gatson Bates, a civil rights activist who played a prominent role during the 1957 integration crisis at Little Rock Central High School; and

WHEREAS, the life and legacy of Daisy Gatson Bates has been honored previously by the General Assembly, including by Representative Steele during the 2011 Regular Session in House Resolution 1013; and

WHEREAS, Daisy Gatson Bates was born in Huttig, Arkansas, in 1914, but her mother was murdered in a racially motivated incident when Bates was just three (3) years old, prompting Bates's lifelong interest in ending racial



injustice; and

WHEREAS, in 1941, Daisy Gatson Bates moved to Little Rock to start a newspaper, the "Arkansas State Press", in order to advocate for civil rights and other important issues impacting Black Arkansans; and

WHEREAS, Daisy Gatson Bates and her husband, Lucious Christopher Bates, worked closely with the Little Rock branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and in 1952 Bates was elected president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Arkansas State Conference; and

WHEREAS, Daisy Gatson Bates was already well-known as a civil rights advocate in the Arkansas Black community when she came to the attention of the rest of the state and the entire world as an advocate for public school integration during the federal court case, Aaron v. Cooper, 143 F.Supp. 855 (E.D. Ark. 1956), that set the stage for the 1957 desegregation of Little Rock Central High School; and

WHEREAS, Daisy Gatson Bates mentored and cared for the nine (9) Black students, later known as the Little Rock Nine, who attended Little Rock Central High School during the school year of 1957-1958, functioning as the principal spokesperson for the children and for school desegregation, as a result of which she and her family suffered intimidation and physical attacks; and

WHEREAS, Daisy Gatson Bates never wavered in her support of the Little Rock Nine during their difficult first year at Little Rock Central High School, a time in which all nine (9) students suffered verbal and physical assaults from classmates, teachers, and other citizens of Arkansas; and

WHEREAS, in 1960, Daisy Gatson Bates moved to New York City and wrote a memoir, "The Long Shadow of Little Rock", about her experience with the Little Rock Nine and her efforts to desegregate public schools; and

WHEREAS, Daisy Gatson Bates later moved to Washington, D.C., where she

spoke at the March on Washington in 1963 and worked in the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson on antipoverty programs; and

WHEREAS, after suffering a stroke, Daisy Gatson Bates returned to Arkansas in 1965 to advocate for economic self-sufficiency for poor Black Arkansans, securing grants and donations for community improvements such as sewer systems and Head Start programs; and

WHEREAS, following the death of Daisy Gatson Bates in 1999, a crowd of more than two thousand (2,000) gathered at Robinson Auditorium in Little Rock to honor her memory, at which event President William Jefferson "Bill" Clinton compared Bates to a diamond that gets "chipped away and formed and shines more brightly"; and

WHEREAS, in 2001, the General Assembly enacted a provision recognizing the third Monday in February as Daisy Gatson Bates Day, an official state holiday; and

WHEREAS, many streets in Arkansas towns, including in Little Rock, bear the name of Daisy Gatson Bates; and

WHEREAS, in February 2012, the Public Broadcasting Service broadcast a documentary called "Daisy Bates: First Lady of Little Rock"; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, the General Assembly passed a law to replace the statues in the National Statuary Hall Collection in the United States Capitol with statues of Johnny Cash and of Daisy Gatson Bates; and

WHEREAS, the statue of Daisy Gatson Bates, created by artist Benjamin Victor, was unveiled in the United States Capitol on May 8, 2024; and

WHEREAS, the statue of Daisy Gatson Bates depicts her walking forward with a folded copy of the Arkansas State Press newspaper in her left hand and a pen and notepad in her right hand, with a National Association for the Advancement of Colored People pin on her left lapel and a rose on the left side of her jacket, which is a symbol of Bates's continually blossoming

motivation for addressing racial inequality,

NOW THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NINETY-FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

THAT the House of Representatives recognize Monday, February 17, 2025, as Daisy Gatson Bates Day and also President's Day, and honor Daisy Gatson Bates for her contributions to Arkansas, the nation, and the world, now memorialized in the display of her statue at the National Statuary Hall Collection in the United States Capitol.