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4 **A RESOLUTION**

5
6 Commemorating the life of John Lewis, civil rights activist and congressman from the
7 Georgia Fifth District, and declaring February 21, John Lewis Day in Milwaukee County
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10 WHEREAS, John Robert Lewis entered the world on February 21, 1940 as the
11 son of rural Alabama sharecroppers who endured an upbringing and segregated
12 education under Southern Jim Crow tyranny; and
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14 WHEREAS, Lewis became a disciple of nonviolent protest, joining the
15 burgeoning Civil Rights Movement emboldened by examples established by Rosa
16 Parks and the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., participating in lunch counter sit-ins
17 and similar protests of segregated public spaces; and
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19 WHEREAS, Lewis was in 1961 among the first 13 "Freedom Riders" who
20 challenged segregation on public transportation by riding buses across the South and
21 was beaten by a mob of Whites and left unconscious in a pool of his own blood; and
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23 WHEREAS, Lewis became chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating
24 Committee (SNCC) in 1963, went on to get arrested some 40 times during civil rights
25 protests, and was an organizer of and speaker at the March on Washington for Jobs
26 and Freedom where the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous "I Have a
27 Dream" speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial; and
28

29 WHEREAS, Lewis told the crowd gathered at the March on Washington for Jobs
30 and Freedom, "I appeal to all of you to get into this great revolution that is sweeping this
31 nation. Get in and stay in the streets of every city, every village, and hamlet of this
32 nation until true freedom comes, until the revolution of 1776 is complete."; and
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34 WHEREAS, Lewis led SNCC's 1964 "Mississippi Freedom Summer" to register
35 Southern Black voters and show the rest of the United States the evils of the Jim Crow
36 Regime; and
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38 WHEREAS, Lewis co-organized the Selma to Montgomery marches which on
39 March 7, 1965, Bloody Sunday, upon crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge, Lewis was
40 among the many brutally beaten by Alabama State Troopers and the Dallas County

41 Sheriff's Department, having his beating and subsequent skull fracture captured in a
42 now famous photograph; and

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44 WHEREAS, Lewis studied in Nashville at the American Baptist Theological
45 Institute and Fisk University, earning Bachelor of Arts degrees in religion and philosophy
46 in 1967; and

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48 WHEREAS, Lewis went on to be considered one of the "Big Six" of the Civil
49 Rights Movement, alongside the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., James Farmer, A.
50 Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins, and Whitney Young; and

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52 WHEREAS, Lewis began a political career as an Atlanta city councilman in 1981,
53 was elected to the Congressional House of Representatives in 1986, ushering in the
54 National Museum of African American History and Culture, and serving most recently as
55 Chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Oversight until his
56 death of pancreatic cancer on July 17, 2020; and

57

58 WHEREAS, from July 27 to July 28, 2020, Lewis was one of the few to lie in
59 state in the United States Capitol Rotunda, joining the likes of The Great Emancipator
60 Abraham Lincoln, and leading Civil War era abolitionists Thaddeus Stevens and
61 Charles Sumner;

62

63 WHEREAS, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi has described Lewis as the
64 "conscience of the Congress;" and as keynote speaker for the Emory University Class
65 of 2014, he told the graduates, "As young people, you must understand that there are
66 forces that want to take us back to another period. But you must say, 'But we're not
67 going back, we made too much progress and we're going forward.' There might be
68 some setbacks, some delays, some disappointments. But you must never ever give up
69 or give in. You must keep the faith and keep your eyes on the prize. That is your
70 calling, that is your mission, that is your moral obligation, that is your mandate, get out
71 there and do it!"; and

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73 WHEREAS, the Committee on Economic and Community Development, at its
74 special meeting of February 24, 2021, recommended adoption of File No. 21-238
75 (vote 5-0); now, therefore,

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77 BE IT RESOLVED, Milwaukee County *in memoriam*, celebrates the life and
78 accomplishments of John Robert Lewis and hereby declares February 21 as John
79 Lewis Day in Milwaukee County.

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82 02/24/21
83 s:\committees\2021\feb\ecd special meeting 022421\resolutions\21-238 john lewis day.docx