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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

HOUSE RESOLUTION

HONORING REV. DR. BERNARD LAFAYETTE JR. FOR HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE
STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

Introduced By: Representatives Biah, Blazejewski, Kazarian, Chippendale, McNamara,
Kennedy, Ajello, Potter, Shallcross Smith, and Boylan

Date Introduced: June 03, 2026

Referred To: House read and passed

1 WHEREAS, Rev. Dr. Bernard LaFayette Jr. was a distinguished civil rights leader,
2 educator, and global advocate for nonviolence, whose life and work advanced the principles of
3 justice, reconciliation, and peaceful social transformation; and

4 WHEREAS, Rev. Dr. LaFayette was a key figure in the American Civil Rights
5 Movement, serving as a leader in the Nashville sit-ins, a Freedom Rider, a member of the Student
6 Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), an associate of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. within
7 the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the National Coordinator of the 1968
8 Poor People's Campaign; and

9 WHEREAS, Rev. Dr. LaFayette played a critical organizing and strategic role in the
10 Selma Movement, including work in the years preceding the national focus on Selma, helping to
11 lay the groundwork for the campaign that contributed to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of
12 1965; and

13 WHEREAS, Rev. Dr. LaFayette dedicated his life to the teaching and practice of Kingian
14 Nonviolence, extending his work nationally and internationally to train leaders, communities, and
15 institutions in the philosophy and application of nonviolence; and

16 WHEREAS, Rev. Dr. LaFayette made a profound and lasting impact on the State of
17 Rhode Island, first through nonviolence trainings conducted in Providence, and subsequently
18 through his service as Distinguished Scholar-in-Residence at the University of Rhode Island; and

19 WHEREAS, Rev. Dr. LaFayette served as the inaugural Director of the University of

1 Rhode Island's Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies from 1999 to 2009, where he helped
2 build one of the nation's leading academic centers dedicated to the study and practice of
3 nonviolence; and

4 WHEREAS, Through his leadership, teaching, and mentorship, Rev. Dr. LaFayette
5 helped shape generations of students, educators, and community leaders in Rhode Island and
6 beyond, including through the development of the International Nonviolence Summer Institute;
7 and

8 WHEREAS, Rev. Dr. LaFayette further served the State of Rhode Island as Chair of the
9 Governor's Select Commission on Race and Police-Community Relations, helping to guide
10 critical statewide dialogue and reflection on issues of race, justice, and public safety; and

11 WHEREAS, His work in Rhode Island helped catalyze the growth of nonviolence
12 education, leadership, and community-based peacebuilding efforts across the state, influencing
13 institutions and individuals dedicated to advancing peace and justice; and

14 WHEREAS, Rev. Dr. LaFayette's legacy continues to live on through the many lives he
15 touched, the institutions he strengthened, and the enduring principles of nonviolence he faithfully
16 advanced; now, therefore be it

17 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island hereby
18 honors the life, legacy, and contributions of Rev. Dr. Bernard LaFayette Jr., and expresses its
19 deepest gratitude for his profound impact on the State of Rhode Island, the nation, and the world;
20 and be it further

21 RESOLVED, That this House extends its deepest condolences to the family, friends,
22 colleagues, and all those whose lives were enriched by Rev. Dr. LaFayette's extraordinary life and
23 work; and be it further

24 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
25 transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to the family of Rev. Dr. Bernard LaFayette Jr.

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