

HR140 INTRODUCED



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2 By Representatives Ensler, Gray, McClammy, Warren, Lawrence,
3 Clarke, Forte, Travis, Bracy, Hassell, Moore (M), Rogers,
4 Morris, Sellers, Hall, Daniels, Givan, Jackson, Plump,
5 England, Boyd

6 RFD:

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9 2023 Regular Session



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HR_____ MOURNING THE DEATH AND CELEBRATING THE LIFE AND
LEGACY OF HARRY BELAFONTE.

WHEREAS, it is with profound sorrow that we note the
death of Harry Belafonte, activist and entertainer, on April
25, 2023, at the age of 96; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Belafonte was a committed activist
before he achieved fame as an actor and singer; he was born
Harold George Bellanfanti, Jr. on March 1, 1927, to Jamaican
immigrants in New York City and raised by his mother,
Melvine Love Bellanfanti; it was she who taught him to fight
against injustice; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Belafonte joined the United States Navy
in 1944 at the age of 17 and served in a manual labor
position on the ship; his naval service had a profound
impact on him; he met college educated Black men who gave
him a wider exposure to the world by discussing issues
surrounding segregation and colonialism with him; he
returned from war with a new perspective, and like many
other Black servicemen, he was angered that America
committed to fighting fascism and communism abroad but kept
its oppressive and segregationist policies at home; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Belafonte became a recording artist in
1949 and acted in his first movie, "Bright Road," in 1953;
he was a rare talent, having won all four major awards:



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29 three Grammy Awards, a Tony Award, an Emmy Award, and in
30 2014, an honorary Academy Award for his humanitarian work;
31 he wanted to use his career and fame as a vehicle for his
32 activist work, which he did at great risk to his
33 entertainment career; and

34 WHEREAS, Mr. Belafonte was a friend to Reverend Dr.
35 Martin Luther King, Jr. and often offered advice and
36 strategy; he raised funds for the Southern Christian
37 Leadership Conference, led by Reverend Dr. King; he
38 frequently used his wealth to bail out activists who were
39 jailed during civil rights campaigns; he helped to organize
40 and participated in the 1963 March on Washington; he
41 financially supported the voter registration efforts in
42 Mississippi and personally delivered cash to those
43 organizers; and he was an active participant in the historic
44 Selma to Montgomery March in 1965; and

45 WHEREAS, Mr. Belafonte never stopped his activism; he
46 spoke out often for global struggles, including war, hunger,
47 poverty, disease, and racial oppression; no one was safe
48 from his sharp wit and criticism, whether they were
49 perpetrators of atrocities or other celebrities who did not
50 take a bold stance on social justice; he became a UNICEF
51 Goodwill Ambassador for his support in the fight against the
52 HIV/Aids Virus; he worked on the ground in South Africa to
53 campaign against apartheid; and he had the idea to organize
54 the most popular recording artists across all genres of
55 music to record and release "We Are the World," donating the
56 proceeds for famine relief in Africa in 1985; the song was a



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57 hit; and

58 WHEREAS, Mr. Belafonte was a pioneer in the civil
59 rights movement, a respected leader among his peers for his
60 humanitarian work, and an inspiration to many around the
61 world to use their own voices against oppression of all
62 kinds; now therefore,

63 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
64 LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA, That the death of Harry Belafonte is
65 recorded with deep sadness and with our utmost respect and
66 admiration for his humanitarian work and achievements; his
67 loss will be deeply felt by his fans and all those who were
68 helped and inspired by his activism; we are consoled and
69 uplifted by his lasting legacy.

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