

117TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 301

To amend title 36, United States Code, to establish the composition known as “Lift Every Voice and Sing” as the national hymn of the United States.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 13, 2021

Mr. CLYBURN (for himself, Mr. LAWSON of Florida, Mr. AGUILAR, Ms. WILSON of Florida, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Ms. BASS, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Mr. TORRES of New York, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. HORSFORD, Mr. RUSH, Ms. JACOBS of California, Ms. TLAIB, Mrs. LURIA, Ms. JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. VEASEY, Mr. SUOZZI, Mr. EVANS, Ms. LEE of California, Mr. STANTON, Ms. STEVENS, Mr. LIEU, Mr. KHANNA, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mr. CARSON, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Ms. DAVIDS of Kansas, Mr. KILMER, Mr. COHEN, Ms. ROSS, Mr. PASCARELL, Mr. SOTO, Mr. NORCROSS, Ms. NORTON, Ms. SEWELL, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Ms. MENG, and Ms. SLOTKIN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

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## A BILL

To amend title 36, United States Code, to establish the composition known as “Lift Every Voice and Sing” as the national hymn of the United States.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS.**

4 Congress finds the following:

1           (1) “Lift Every Voice and Sing” is a beloved  
2           hymn that is currently produced and distributed by  
3           approximately 40 religious publishing houses  
4           throughout the United States.

5           (2) “Lift Every Voice and Sing” is regularly  
6           sung at various religious services and choir perform-  
7           ances at community and cultural events to com-  
8           memorate the struggles that have accompanied our  
9           Nation’s “pursuit of a more perfect Union”.

10          (3) James Weldon Johnson wrote the poem  
11          “Lift Every Voice and Sing” in 1899 to celebrate  
12          the anniversary of President Abraham Lincoln’s  
13          birthday, and his brother, John Rosamond Johnson,  
14          set the poem to music.

15          (4) “Lift Every Voice and Sing” was first per-  
16          formed on February 12, 1900, by a choir of 500  
17          school children from the Stanton School in the John-  
18          sons’ hometown of Jacksonville, Florida, where  
19          James Weldon Johnson served as the principal.

20          (5) In 1905, Booker T. Washington’s recogni-  
21          tion of “Lift Every Voice and Sing” helped to make  
22          it a very popular song in Black communities  
23          throughout the United States.

24          (6) In 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt  
25          named James Weldon Johnson to diplomatic posi-

1 tions in Venezuela and Nicaragua, and when he re-  
2 turned to the United States, he became affiliated  
3 with the NAACP.

4 (7) In the 1920s, the NAACP chose “Lift  
5 Every Voice and Sing” as its official song and it was  
6 dubbed the “Black National anthem”.

7 (8) In 1934, James Weldon Johnson, a grad-  
8 uate of Clark Atlanta University, became the first  
9 African-American professor at New York University,  
10 and later served in a similar capacity at Fisk Uni-  
11 versity in Nashville, Tennessee.

12 (9) The lyrics of “Lift Every Voice and Sing”  
13 inspired the 16 foot sculpture, “The Harp” created  
14 by the renowned artist Augusta Savage and commis-  
15 sioned by the 1939 New York World’s Fair.

16 (10) “Lift Every Voice and Sing” is sung at  
17 gatherings of the Faith and Politics Institute, whose  
18 bipartisan programs and pilgrimages include partici-  
19 pation by Members of Congress, and was co-chaired  
20 for many years by the late Congressmen, Democrat  
21 John Lewis and Republican Amo Houghton, both of  
22 whom transitioned in 2020.

1 **SEC. 2. NATIONAL HYMN.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 3 of title 36, United  
3 States Code, is amended by adding at the end the fol-  
4 lowing:

5 **“§ 306. National hymn**

6 “The composition consisting of the words and music  
7 known as ‘Lift Every Voice and Sing’ is designated as the  
8 national hymn of the United States.”.

9 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections  
10 for chapter 3 of title 36, United States Code, is amended  
11 by adding at the end the following:

“306. National hymn.”.

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