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.

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. PASCRELL, 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.

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.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-

tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

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

(2) “Lift Every Voice and Sing” is regularly sung at various religious services and choir performances at community and cultural events to commemorate the struggles that have accompanied our Nation’s “pursuit of a more perfect Union”.

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

(4) “Lift Every Voice and Sing” was first performed on February 12, 1900, by a choir of 500 school children from the Stanton School in the Johnsons’ hometown of Jacksonville, Florida, where James Weldon Johnson served as the principal.

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

(6) In 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt named James Weldon Johnson to diplomatic posi-
tions in Venezuela and Nicaragua, and when he re-
turned to the United States, he became affiliated
with the NAACP.

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

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

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

(10) “Lift Every Voice and Sing” is sung at
gatherings of the Faith and Politics Institute, whose
bipartisan programs and pilgrimages include partici-
pation by Members of Congress, and was co-chaired
for many years by the late Congressmen, Democrat
John Lewis and Republican Amo Houghton, both of
whom transitioned in 2020.
SEC. 2. NATIONAL HYMN.

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

“§ 306. National hymn

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

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

“306. National hymn.”. 

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