

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 40

Senator Chang offered the following resolution:

1 A resolution to commemorate April 22-29, 2019, as Black April
2 Memorial Week.

3 Whereas, April 30, 2019, marks the 44th anniversary of the end
4 of the Vietnam War and the start of the eventual exodus of several
5 million Vietnamese out of Vietnam after South Vietnam's capital of
6 Saigon fell to the communists on April 30, 1975; and

7 Whereas, For many Vietnam and Vietnam-era veterans who were
8 directly involved in the war and Vietnamese-Americans who have
9 settled in the United States, the Vietnam War was a tragedy full of
10 great suffering and the loss of American, Vietnamese, and Southeast
11 Asian lives; and

12 Whereas, Over 58,000 people were killed and 304,000 were

1 wounded out of the 2.59 million Americans who served in the Vietnam
2 War. One out of every ten Americans who served in Vietnam became a
3 casualty of war; and

4 Whereas, South Vietnamese armed forces lost 275,000 soldiers
5 and many more wounded along with an unknown number of Vietnamese
6 civilian casualties; and

7 Whereas, During the American evacuation of Saigon, the first
8 wave of 135,000 Vietnamese who were mostly military officers and
9 their families, took temporary shelter through several
10 international refugee camps at Camp Pendleton in San Diego, Fort
11 Chaffee in Arkansas, and Indiantown Gap in Pennsylvania; and

12 Whereas, Starting in 1977, and lasting through the mid-1980s,
13 a second wave of Vietnamese refugees comprised mostly of "boat
14 people" began leaving Vietnam. Seeing no future under communism,
15 nearly 800,000 boat people risked their lives in small, dangerous
16 boats to travel to resettlement camps in Hong Kong, Malaysia,
17 Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines before eventually being
18 resettled in the United States. The Red Cross estimated that during
19 that time, at least 300,000 Vietnamese died on the high seas while
20 trying to escape communism; and

21 Whereas, After 1985, a third wave of Vietnamese refugees came
22 to the United States under the Orderly Departure Program; and

23 Whereas, In 1988, Congress passed the Operation Homecoming
24 Act, a program allowing approximately 80,000 Amerasian children
25 (offspring of GI fathers and Vietnamese mothers) to come to
26 America; and

27 Whereas, By 1990, the fourth wave of Vietnamese refugees began
28 arriving in the United States under the Humanitarian Operation and
29 today, more than 1.7 million Vietnamese immigrants reside in the

1 United States; and

2 Whereas, Studies using census data show that foreign-born
3 Vietnamese entering the United States in the 1980s, 1990s, and
4 2000s have seen an increase in terms of English proficiency,
5 proportion of college graduates, the number of owner-occupied
6 housing, family median income, and naturalization; and

7 Whereas, Over the years, Vietnamese immigrants have overcome
8 social, economic, and language barriers of unforeseen magnitude to
9 grow and become the most assimilated along civic dimensions of any
10 large group in America; and

11 Whereas, Through emphasis on intense study, Vietnamese-
12 Americans have reached the pinnacles of American success in a
13 variety of fields including business and entrepreneurship, science
14 and technology, space travel, medicine, the executive branch of the
15 United States government, politics, the United States military, the
16 United States judicial system, professional sports, and, most
17 recently, cultural icon status in cooking, modeling, acting, and
18 comedy; and

19 Whereas, In order to serve their community and prosper in
20 America, Vietnamese Americans formed well-established and thriving
21 Vietnamese-American commercial districts throughout the United
22 States, including an enclave in southeast Oakland County and in
23 west Michigan; and

24 Whereas, More than 17,000 Vietnamese now live in Michigan; and

25 Whereas, We must teach our children and future generations the
26 important lessons from the Vietnam War, including how the plight of
27 the Vietnamese refugees following the end of war serves as a
28 powerful example of the values of freedom and democracy; and

29 Whereas, Refugees and immigrants from the former Republic of

1 Vietnam who came to the United States and settled as free
2 Vietnamese-Americans are honored and remembered for their
3 sacrifices for freedom and human rights and for their ongoing
4 contributions to our democratic society; and

5 Whereas, The Vietnamese Heritage and Freedom flag, which is
6 yellow with three horizontal red stripes, is the only symbol that
7 can unite most Vietnamese around the world and bring them together
8 under the banner that symbolizes the aspiration for freedom and
9 democracy in their homeland; and

10 Whereas, Although united in sorrow as they commemorate April
11 30, 2019, as Black April, an occasion to reflect on the sacrifices
12 of the past, Vietnamese-American communities throughout Michigan
13 consider Black April a memorial and remembrance of the resilience
14 of the Vietnamese people; now, therefore, be it

15 Resolved by the Senate, That the members of this legislative
16 body commemorate April 22-29, 2019, as Black April Memorial Week. We
17 recognize this as a special time for Michiganians to honor the
18 tragedy of the suffering and countless lives lost during the
19 Vietnam War era and to pay tribute to those lives lost by affecting
20 human rights and freedom to the people of Vietnam.