

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 36

Senator Chang offered the following resolution:

1 A resolution to commemorate April 23-30, 2023, as Black April
2 Memorial Week.

3 Whereas, April 30, 2023, marks the 48th 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 were wounded, along with an unknown number of
6 Vietnamese 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,
11 California, Fort Chaffee in Arkansas, and Indiantown Gap in
12 Pennsylvania; and

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

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

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

28 Whereas, By 1990, the fourth wave of Vietnamese refugees began
29 arriving in the United States under the Humanitarian Operation, and

1 today, more than 1.7 million Vietnamese immigrants reside in the
2 United States; and

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

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

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

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

25 Whereas, More than 25,276 Vietnamese now live in Michigan; and

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

1 Whereas, Refugees and immigrants from the former Republic of
2 Vietnam, who came to the United States and settled as free
3 Vietnamese Americans, are honored and remembered for their
4 sacrifices of freedom, human rights, and for their ongoing
5 contributions to our democratic society; and

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

11 Whereas, Although united in sorrow as they commemorate April
12 30, 2023, as Black April, an occasion to reflect on the sacrifices
13 of the past, Vietnamese American communities throughout Michigan
14 consider Black April a memorial and remembrance of the resilience
15 of the Vietnamese people; now, therefore, be it

16 Resolved by the Senate, That the members of this legislative
17 body commemorate April 23-30, 2023, as Black April Memorial Week.
18 We recognize this special time for Michigianians to honor the
19 tragedy of the suffering and countless lives lost during the
20 Vietnam War era, while also paying tribute to those lives lost by
21 human rights and freedom to the people of Vietnam.