

**No. R-508. House concurrent resolution designating April 2012 as Fair Housing Month in Vermont.**

(H.C.R.392)

Offered by: Representatives Ram of Burlington, Grad of Moretown, Head of South Burlington, Lippert of Hinesburg, Moran of Wardsboro, O'Sullivan of Burlington and Stevens of Shoreham

Whereas, for generations, millions of Americans were denied the housing of their choice because of personal factors such as race, ethnicity, or religion, and

Whereas, on April 11, 1968, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1968, Title VIII of which is known as the Fair Housing Act, and

Whereas, the legislative breakthrough achieved in this act began a process of legally guaranteeing that individuals could rent or purchase a home without regard to their race, religion, national origin, age, or gender, and, as the act was later amended, disability, and

Whereas, 9 V.S.A. § 4503(a)(1) prohibits discrimination in the rental or sale of housing based on “race, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, religious creed, color, national origin, or handicap of a person, or because a person intends to occupy a dwelling with one or more minor children, or because a person is a recipient of public assistance” and both reinforces and broadens the scope of the federal law, and

Whereas, unfortunately, over 40 years later, there is documented proof that the vestiges of housing discrimination remain alive in Vermont, and

Whereas, Vermont Legal Aid, with funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, conducted a series of 90 onsite visits and

340 telephone calls to test the extent to which landlords would engage in discriminatory practices when offering rental housing, and

Whereas, Rachel Batterson of Vermont Legal Aid explained in a Vermont Public Radio interview, that “landlords preferred white testers of U.S. origin 38 percent of the time when the test was on race/color, 40 percent of the time when the test was based on national origin, and . . . 36 percent of the landlords preferred families without children,” and

Whereas, the study also found accessibility violations of fair housing law in 80 percent of the units surveyed, and

Whereas, the housing that was destroyed in Tropical Storm Irene limits the availability of affordable housing in some communities, and

Whereas, the designation of April as Fair Housing Month will serve as a catalyst for Vermonters to focus on this important public policy matter, now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly designates April 2012 as Fair Housing Month in Vermont, and be it further

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Vermont Human Rights Commission.