



ALABAMA STATE SENATE
ALABAMA STATE HOUSE
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130-4600

ALABAMA

HANK SANDERS
STATE SENATOR 23RD DISTRICT
P.O. BOX 1290
SELMA, ALABAMA 36702
SELMA (334) 526-4531
MONTGOMERY (334) 242-7860

COMMITTEES:
FINANCE & TAXATION EDUCATION
EDUCATION & YOUTH AFFAIRS
ENERGY & TRANSPORTATION
LOCAL LEGISLATION

January 25, 2015

An Open Letter to President Barack Obama

Dear President Obama:

We love you. We respect you. We support you. We strongly supported your becoming President and have continued to support you through all the trying times. We continue to love, respect and support you.

Mr. President, I write this letter with the greatest of respect and appreciation. I write this as an open letter because it is important that you know and all people know that we are not trying to stop you from coming to Selma at any time you want to come. Our door of welcome is always wide open to you.

President Obama, based upon our true love and respect, we want you to know that the Bloody Sunday March is sacred. It was not Bloody Saturday or Blood Monday or Bloody March 7th. It was Bloody Sunday. Therefore, the Bloody Sunday March must go on as planned on Sunday, March 8th.

Bloody Sunday is sacred because blood was shed on the first Sunday in March in 1965. Long-oppressed people were peacefully seeking their constitutional right to vote and protest the brutal murder of Jimmie Lee Jackson. They were beaten so badly that blood ran into the Alabama River. It was Sunday, March 7, 1965, but it was not Bloody March the 7th. It was Bloody Sunday. Within days after this ordeal, the moment was christened "Bloody Sunday." The words "Bloody Sunday" captured the sacredness of the moment, of the day, of the struggle, of the blood, of the sacrifice. It has been widely used for 50 years. Bloody Sunday is sacred.

President Obama, the moment was sacred because blood was shed. The moment was sacred because the blood was shed on Sunday, a holy day for so many. The moment was sacred because the day, the blood and the struggle came together in that time and space. Bloody Sunday is sacred.

- more -

Mr. President, we are informed that the group “The Faith and Politics Institute” unilaterally decided to move the Bloody Sunday commemoration from Sunday to Saturday in order to have a celebration in Montgomery on Sunday at the time the Bloody Sunday March always takes place. This was an act designed to diminish Bloody Sunday. They could easily have had their Montgomery event on Saturday and joined in the Bloody Sunday March on Sunday. They chose instead to try and move Bloody Sunday to Saturday. The Bloody Sunday March cannot be moved by anyone or any group, especially on the 50th Anniversary. Bloody Sunday is sacred and therefore bigger than any of us or any group and must go on.

The Bloody Sunday March has been commemorated on Sunday in Selma every year for 40-plus years commencing in the early 1970s. I have joined with others in lifting it and commemorating it every one of those years. The Selma-to-Montgomery March is usually celebrated/reenacted every five years, but Bloody Sunday is so sacred that it is commemorated every year on Sunday. As you will recall, Mr. President, you came to Selma in 2007 on Bloody Sunday. President Bill Clinton came in 2000 when he was in office and again in 2007 on Bloody Sunday. Vice President Joe Biden came in 2013 on Bloody Sunday. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton came in 2007 on Bloody Sunday. Many leaders have come every year on Bloody Sunday for decades because it is a holy pilgrimage for them. Bloody Sunday is sacred.

We understand that the Faith and Politics Institute is a powerful and influential group, and we respect that. However, they do not know that Bloody Sunday is sacred. They do not know that blood made a difference. They do not know that Sunday made a difference. They do not respect the 40-plus years of continuous sacred commemorations on Sunday. Bloody Sunday is sacred.

Mr. President, it was the sacredness of Bloody Sunday that moved the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to put out a national call for religious leaders of every stripe to come to Selma. It was Bloody Sunday that was captured on film and plastered on television screens across the nation and around the world. It was Bloody Sunday that moved President Lyndon Baines Johnson to make his famous speech in support of voting rights, concluding with the words, “We Shall Overcome.” It was the sacredness of Bloody Sunday that made it possible for the Voting Rights Act to become law and for you to be elected President. Bloody Sunday is sacred.

Mr. President, Bloody Sunday is a symbol for voting rights struggles, not only in Selma and Alabama but across the country and throughout the world. It is not Bloody Saturday or Bloody March 7th, it is Bloody Sunday. The symbol is inspirational and revered by so many. People come from all over the world because Bloody Sunday is sacred.

Mr. President, back in 2013, we invited you to come to Selma for the 50th Anniversary of Bloody Sunday on March 8, 2015. We renewed the invitation in 2014. Because your election is both a result of and a symbol of Bloody Sunday, we knew how much your presence would mean for this once-in-a-lifetime 50th Commemoration. We are very glad you are coming, even on Saturday, but the Bloody Sunday March must go on because it is sacred.

Open Letter to President Obama re: Bloody Sunday – page 3 of 3

People from across the country and around the world are contacting many of us. Some are just confused. Some are upset. And some feel violated. Many have planned the trip for the 50th Anniversary of Bloody Sunday for years. We want you to come at whatever time you can or desire. However, we want everyone to know that the Bloody Sunday March must and will take place in Selma on Sunday, March 8th.

With voting under such relentless attacks, we all need to work together in every way to protect and restore the right to vote. Therefore, please know we will work with you in every way. Bloody Sunday is not just a time to recall and celebrate but also is a time to reassess and recommit. Bloody Sunday is sacred, and we welcome you with open arms.

Yours in respect and appreciation.

Hank Sanders

Hank Sanders
Alabama State Senator