



**Statement on the Passing of Frankie Muse Freeman
January 19, 2018**

We join the nation in mourning the passing of civil rights hero and former Commissioner Frankie Muse Freeman. We offer our heartfelt condolences to her family and friends.

Ms. Freeman began her service with the Commission as a member of our Missouri State Advisory Committee. In 1964, President Johnson appointed her to the Commission, making Ms. Freeman the first woman to serve in that role. She served the nation with distinction for 16 years as the Commission handled seminal civil rights issues such as evaluating the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the progress of desegregating schools and health and welfare services, and the state of equal employment opportunity. Ms. Freeman's leadership was evident – when the Commission went to Mississippi in 1965 for a voting rights hearing, she chose to visit black churches that had been burned after black people tried to register to vote; the visit was reportedly so moving that Commissioners decided to arrange site visits to coincide with hearings whenever possible thereafter.

Ms. Freeman dedicated her career to fighting for civil rights as a practicing attorney at federal and state levels, advocating for equal education and housing opportunities, among other issues. In one of her most well-known roles, she was lead attorney in the landmark case, *Davis v. St. Louis Housing Authority*, which resulted in the end of racial segregation in public housing in the city.

In 2007, her footsteps were added to the International Civil Rights Walk of Fame at the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site. In 2003, she published her memoir, *A Song of Faith and Hope: The Life of Frankie Muse Freeman*. She served for many years as a Trustee of Howard University, and received honorary doctorates from five American universities.

Ms. Freeman's positive impact on civil rights cannot be overstated. As a nation, we owe her an enormous debt of gratitude. As Commissioners, we are proud to continue her legacy.

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