

A large crowd gathered at Collins Park on Thursday evening to celebrate the life and legacy of former Georgia Congressman John Lewis on the fifth anniversary of his death.

The memorial, dubbed “Good Trouble Lives On,” invoked Lewis’ famous call for citizens to “Get in good trouble, necessary trouble, and redeem the soul of America.”

Approximately 200 people turned out for the Thursday night event, with many toting signs honoring Lewis or protesting the Trump administration that variously read “No Kings Now,” “This is Good Trouble,” “Veteran Against Racism” and “If You’re Not Outraged, Then You’re Not Paying Attention.”

“Right now, we are in a moment of crisis that demands action,” Nikita Bowen-Hardy, president of the NAACP Schenectady Branch said on Thursday. “From voting on bills like the SAVE Act, to attacks on protests, reproductive rights and LBGTQ+ safety and education, we are witnessing an orchestrated attempt to roll back the hard-fought progress of generations before us.”

The federal SAVE Act, which has passed the House of Representatives and is awaiting a vote in the Senate, would require Americans to provide proof of citizenship in order to register to vote.

Lewis, who served for over three decades in Congress before his death in 2020, was a civil rights leader who led a famed 1965 protest march against segregation across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, that ended with police beating marchers with clubs. Lewis suffered a skull fracture.

Sixty years later, the Thursday night memorial evoked the spirit of that march, with protesters trekking across the Western Gateway Bridge in memory of Lewis.

“John Lewis said ‘you are a light, you are the light,’” Pastor Sara Baron of the First United Methodist Church said on Thursday as she led the crowd in a call-and-response quoting Lewis. “‘Never let any person or force dampen, dim or diminish your light. Release the need to hate, harbor division and the enticement of revenge.’”

The march, which was part of a national day of events marking the anniversary of Lewis’ passing, was hosted by the League of Women Voters Schenectady County, with league president Cheryl Nechamen saying the event was intended as a protest march inspired by Lewis’ legacy.

“Really it’s to go and show that we’re not happy with what’s happening in Washington,” Nechamen said. “Lewis said you should make good trouble, so we’re here trying to make good trouble.”

Riley Hart, organizer for the Unite NY, a nonprofit focused on election reform, called on Thursday for New York to implement term limits for state politicians, to introduce ranked choice voting and for independent voters to be allowed to vote in party primaries, which they currently are excluded from.

“We are here not just to march and not just to remember, we’re here to move,” Bowen-Hardy said.