

By Senator Lawson

6-03529-09

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Senate Resolution

A resolution honoring the life and legacy of Floridian of the Century Governor LeRoy Collins on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of his birth.

WHEREAS, Thomas LeRoy Collins was born in Tallahassee on March 10, 1909, and

WHEREAS, in 1934, LeRoy Collins was elected to the Florida House, where he served until 1940, when he was elected to the Florida Senate, and

WHEREAS, Leroy Collins served with honor and dignity in the Florida Senate, where he twice received the title of "Most Valuable Senator," resigning to fight with the United States Navy in World War II, and then returned to serve until 1954, and

WHEREAS, Leroy Collins was sworn in as the 33rd Governor of the State of Florida on January 4, 1955, as the civil rights movement entered a tumultuous era following the ruling of the United States Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education*, and

WHEREAS, despite his initial disagreement with the high court's ruling in that case, Governor LeRoy Collins strongly opposed attempts on the part of the Florida Legislature to subvert the authority of the court through a policy known as interposition, writing after the Legislature passed a resolution that was not subject to veto,

"(I)f this resolution declaring the decisions of the court to be 'null and void' is to be taken seriously, it is anarchy and rebellion against the nation which must remain 'indivisible under God' if it is to survive. Not only will I not condone 'interposition'

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30 as so many have sought me to do, I decry it as an evil
31 thing, whipped up by the demagogues and carried on the
32 hot and erratic winds of passion, prejudice, and
33 hysteria. If history judges me right this day, I want
34 it known that I did my best to avert this blot," and
35 WHEREAS, Governor LeRoy Collins' courageous leadership and
36 legacy lives on in the 21st Century in the hearts and daily
37 lives of all Floridians by virtue of the causes and legislation
38 he championed and advanced, including:

- 39 - Civil rights, human rights, and the rule of law;
- 40 - The advancement of race relations and opportunity and
41 equal protection for all;
- 42 - "Government in the Sunshine;"
- 43 - Education, advocating for additional funding, creating
44 Florida's community college system, and launching the University
45 of South Florida and Florida Atlantic University;
- 46 - Ethics in government;
- 47 - Transportation and the state turnpike systems;
- 48 - Environmental stewardship and the state parks system;
- 49 - Economic diversification;
- 50 - Apportionment and redistricting to achieve fair voting;
- 51 - Moral and ethical principles for justice and the greater
52 good;
- 53 - Compassionate care for those with disabilities;
- 54 - Issues regarding the death penalty;
- 55 - Proper display of the Florida flag; and
- 56 - Public service the Florida Civil Service System, and

57 WHEREAS, Governor LeRoy Collins personified honor and good
58 government, and is a worthy recipient of the title "Floridian of

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59 the Century," and

60 WHEREAS, the month of April 2009, which has been designated
61 as "Florida Service Learning Month" by Governor Charlie Crist,
62 is an appropriate time to publicly recognize and honor the
63 service of Governor LeRoy Collins to the people of the State of
64 Florida, NOW, THEREFORE,

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66 Be It Resolved by the Senate of the State of Florida:

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68 That the Senate honors the legacy of Governor LeRoy
69 Collins, a visionary leader who possessed an uncommon
70 understanding of the common man's plight, stood fast on
71 principle and decency, and avoided taking the road of political
72 expediency, but instead choosing to forge a path of public
73 service that stands as a beacon for elected officials
74 everywhere.

75 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Senate recognizes 2009, the
76 centennial year of the birth of Governor LeRoy Collins, as a
77 year of inspiration and aspiration for all youth, students, and
78 educators involved in Florida Service Learning and for all
79 Floridians.

80 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution, with
81 the Seal of the Senate affixed, be presented to the family of
82 Governor LeRoy Collins as a tangible token of the sentiments of
83 the Florida Senate.