

By Senator Rouson

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Senate Resolution

A resolution acknowledging the abuses experienced by children confined in the Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys and expressing the Legislature's regret for such abuses and the commitment to ensure that the children of the State of Florida are protected from the abuses and violations that took place at such facility.

WHEREAS, the Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys, or the Dozier School for Boys, had campuses in Marianna and Okeechobee, Florida, and was operated by the State of Florida from 1900 until 2011, when the school closed after allegations of abuse were confirmed in separate investigations by the Department of Law Enforcement in 2010 and the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice in 2011, and

WHEREAS, the state and federal investigations revealed that many of the boys who had been sent to the Dozier School for Boys reported credible instances of being physically, psychologically, and sexually abused by staff members at the school, and

WHEREAS, many of the boys who had been sent to the Dozier School for Boys were sent for minor offenses such as truancy, incorrigibility, or smoking, and

WHEREAS, many of the boys were not given a trial before being sent by the State of Florida to the Dozier School for Boys, and

WHEREAS, many of the boys were beaten at a facility known as the "White House" at the Dozier School for Boys, and

WHEREAS, at least one of the Dozier School for Boys

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30 administrators has testified under oath that the boys who were
31 taken to the White House were told to lie face down on a cot in
32 an otherwise empty room, that at times two or three other boys
33 would hold down the boy being punished, that the administrator
34 hit the boys with a thick leather razor strap with a handle
35 eight to ten times per infraction, that at times he witnessed
36 bruises on the boys' buttocks afterward, that the director of
37 the school was always present during the beatings, and that the
38 beatings could be given as punishment for such infractions as
39 smoking, talking about running away, or having an attitude
40 problem, and

41 WHEREAS, the beatings in the Okeechobee facility of the
42 Dozier School for Boys included strikes with leather straps that
43 had quarters or dimes embedded in the leather to provide extra
44 weight, and assaults using probing rods that were made of wood,
45 and

46 WHEREAS, boys were placed in isolation for extended
47 periods, deemed as an "egregious and dangerous practice" by the
48 2011 United States Department of Justice Report on the Dozier
49 School for Boys, and

50 WHEREAS, abuses occurring at the Marianna and Okeechobee
51 campuses of the Dozier School for Boys were considered the
52 standard, accepted practice and procedure for administering
53 discipline at the school, and

54 WHEREAS, former Governor Claude Kirk toured the school in
55 1968 and stated, "If one of your kids were kept in such
56 circumstances, you'd be up there with rifles," and

57 WHEREAS, a forensic investigation funded by the Legislature
58 and conducted by the University of South Florida from 2013 to

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59 2016 found that there are no records of the locations of burial
60 of the children who died at the Dozier School for Boys and that
61 families were often denied access to their child's remains at
62 the time of burial or notified of their child's death only after
63 the child was buried, and

64 WHEREAS, exhumations of bodies began in 2013, and the
65 excavations yielded 55 burial sites, 24 more sites than reported
66 in official records, and

67 WHEREAS, many questions persist about who is buried at the
68 Dozier School for Boys and the circumstances surrounding the
69 children's deaths, and

70 WHEREAS, more than 500 former students of the Dozier School
71 for Boys have come forward alleging physical, mental, and sexual
72 abuses from the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, and

73 WHEREAS, the survivors of these abuses have suffered severe
74 physical and psychological damages that have endured throughout
75 their adult lives, NOW, THEREFORE,

76

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

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79 That the Senate acknowledges that the treatment of the boys
80 who were sent to the Dozier School for Boys was cruel and
81 unjust, a violation of human decency toward the individuals who
82 had been placed in the state's care.

83 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Senate acknowledges that
84 the operation of the Dozier School for Boys, including the
85 physical, emotional, and sexual abuse of children confined to
86 the facilities, is a shameful part of the history of the State
87 of Florida.

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88 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Senate regrets that
89 children of this state were subjected to the cruelty and abuse
90 that have come to light in recent years and the State of Florida
91 apologizes to the boys sent to the Dozier School for Boys and
92 their family members for the wrongs committed against them
93 during the 111-year operation of the school.

94 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Senate expresses its
95 commitment to ensure that the children of Florida are protected
96 from the kind of abuse and violation of fundamental human
97 decency that previously took place at a facility operated by
98 employees of the State of Florida.