

By Senator Book

32-01678-19

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Senate Concurrent Resolution

A concurrent resolution acknowledging the injustices perpetrated against the targets of the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee between 1956 and 1965, and offering a formal and heartfelt apology to those whose lives, well-being, and livelihoods were damaged or destroyed by the activities and public pronouncements of those who served on the committee.

WHEREAS, following the special session of the Florida Legislature in July 1956, the act establishing the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee (FLIC) became law, and

WHEREAS, following its establishment, the committee, in conjunction with Tallahassee police, surveilled, harassed, intimidated, and arrested members of the Inter-Civic Council, students from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, and other participants in the bus boycott and carpool network that began in May 1956 and continued until December 1956, and

WHEREAS, on February 1, 1957, the FLIC held its first public hearings, questioning Virgil Hawkins, an African-American man who had been trying to enter the University of Florida law school since 1949, as well as National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) attorneys Francisco Rodriguez and Horace Hill, claiming that the NAACP was violating the law by soliciting plaintiffs for desegregation lawsuits, and

WHEREAS, on February 25, 1957, the committee began public hearings in Miami, demanding that the local NAACP branch surrender all records, including membership lists, and claiming that the branch had been infiltrated by current and former

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30 communists, and

31 WHEREAS, the committee devoted the years of 1957 and 1958  
32 to besmirching NAACP members as criminals and communist  
33 sympathizers in order to slow or halt their efforts to  
34 desegregate Florida schools and public spaces, and

35 WHEREAS, in November and December of 1958, the chief  
36 investigator of the FLIC began an inquiry into alleged  
37 homosexual activity by faculty, staff, and students at the  
38 University of Florida (UF) in Gainesville; allowed officers of  
39 the UF police department to entrap and question without legal  
40 counsel those suspected of such activity; and threatened and  
41 coerced those individuals with a public hearing or perjury  
42 charges into confessing and identifying others as alleged  
43 homosexuals, and

44 WHEREAS, the committee continued the UF and Gainesville  
45 investigations into 1959, having entrapped and intimidated  
46 dozens of individuals on and off campus, interrogating them in  
47 motel rooms and basements, resulting in the firing of 14 faculty  
48 and staff at UF, and

49 WHEREAS, in the spring of 1959 the committee reported to  
50 the Florida Legislature that homosexual professors were  
51 recruiting students into "homosexual practices," and they in  
52 turn were becoming teachers in Florida's public school system  
53 and recruiting even younger students, and

54 WHEREAS, the committee began 4 years of statewide  
55 investigations into alleged homosexual activity by public school  
56 teachers, administrators, and students, working with local law  
57 enforcement agencies and employing the same tactics used at the  
58 University of Florida, and cooperating with the Florida Board of

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59 Education to revoke individuals' teaching certificates, and

60 WHEREAS, in the spring of 1961, the committee began an  
61 inquiry into alleged homosexual activity, liberal teaching  
62 methods, curricula, and policies at the University of South  
63 Florida (USF) in Tampa, and

64 WHEREAS, the FLIC investigator and attorney, together with  
65 local law enforcement, questioned USF faculty, staff, and  
66 students in a motel room without appropriate legal counsel, and  
67 gathered information about the allegedly anti-Christian, pro-  
68 integration, and pro-communist slant of reading assignments,  
69 classroom lectures, and invited campus speakers, and

70 WHEREAS, the committee held public hearings to question USF  
71 faculty and administrators about the content of their courses,  
72 and policies related to hiring faculty and inviting speakers in  
73 an effort to discredit them as atheists, integrationists, and  
74 communist sympathizers, damaging individuals' careers and the  
75 state's national standing in higher education, and

76 WHEREAS, in 1964 and 1965, the committee published  
77 misleading and inflammatory reports about homosexuals and civil  
78 rights activists in Florida, drawing continued unfavorable  
79 national attention and perpetuating falsehoods against residents  
80 of this state, and

81 WHEREAS, the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee  
82 spent 9 years at the expense of the taxpayers of this state  
83 using unconstitutional and unjust methods to discredit and  
84 combat legal, peaceful desegregation efforts; to destroy or  
85 otherwise jeopardize the livelihoods and reputations of  
86 educators, administrators, and other professionals in Florida's  
87 public schools and universities; and to create a climate of fear

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88 that caused pain and suffering among vulnerable residents and  
89 made Florida a national symbol of intolerance, NOW, THEREFORE,  
90  
91 Be It Resolved by the Senate of the State of Florida, the House  
92 of Representatives Concurring:

93  
94 That the Legislature acknowledges the injustices  
95 perpetrated against the targets of the Florida Legislative  
96 Investigation Committee between 1956 and 1965, and offers a  
97 formal and heartfelt apology to those whose lives, well-being,  
98 and livelihoods were damaged or destroyed by the activities and  
99 public pronouncements of those who served on the committee.