

By Senator Book

32-00442-22

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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 a special session of the Florida Legislature in July 1956, the act establishing the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee 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 committee held its first public hearing, questioning Virgil Hawkins, an African-American man who had been seeking admission to 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 of its records, including membership lists, and claiming that the branch had been infiltrated by current and

32-00442-22

2022278__

30 former communists, and

31 WHEREAS, during 1957 and 1958, the committee devoted itself
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 committee's
36 chief investigator began an inquiry into alleged homosexual
37 activity by faculty, staff, and students at the University of
38 Florida (UF) in Gainesville; allowed officers of the UF police
39 department to entrap and question without legal counsel those
40 suspected of such activity; and threatened and coerced those
41 individuals with a public hearing or perjury charges into
42 confessing and identifying others as alleged homosexuals, and

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

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

53 WHEREAS, the committee began 4 years of statewide
54 investigations into alleged homosexual activity by public school
55 teachers, administrators, and students, working with local law
56 enforcement agencies and employing the same tactics used at UF,
57 and cooperating with the State Board of Education to revoke
58 individuals' teaching certificates, and

32-00442-22

2022278__

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

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

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

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

80 WHEREAS, the committee spent 9 years at the expense of the
81 taxpayers of this state using unconstitutional and unjust
82 methods to discredit and combat legal, peaceful desegregation
83 efforts; to destroy or otherwise jeopardize the livelihoods and
84 reputations of educators, administrators, and other
85 professionals in Florida's public schools and universities; and
86 to create a climate of fear that caused pain and suffering among
87 vulnerable residents and made Florida a national symbol of

32-00442-22

2022278__

88 intolerance, NOW, THEREFORE,

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90 Be It Resolved by the Senate of the State of Florida, the House
91 of Representatives Concurring:

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