

By Senator Book

35-00463-24

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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 College of Law 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

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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 in Gainesville; allowed officers of the University of
39 Florida 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 University of Florida
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 members and staff at the University of Florida, 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 that those
52 students were in turn becoming teachers in Florida's public
53 school system 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 State 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 in Tampa, and

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

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

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

83 WHEREAS, at the expense of the taxpayers of this state, the
84 committee spent 9 years using unconstitutional and unjust
85 methods to discredit and combat legal, peaceful desegregation
86 efforts; to destroy or otherwise jeopardize the livelihoods and
87 reputations of educators, administrators, and other

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88 professionals in Florida's public schools and universities; and
89 to create a climate of fear that caused pain and suffering among
90 vulnerable residents and made Florida a national symbol of
91 intolerance, NOW, THEREFORE,

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93 Be It Resolved by the Senate of the State of Florida, the House
94 of Representatives Concurring:

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