

2009 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 816

Commending the Arlington Public Schools and the Commonwealth's public schools on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of public school desegregation in Virginia.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 2, 2009

Agreed to by the Senate, February 2, 2009

WHEREAS, when the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) filed suit on May 23, 1951, to end segregation in the Prince Edward County Schools, the case was consolidated with cases from South Carolina, Delaware, Kansas, and the District of Columbia into Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas; and

WHEREAS, on Monday, May 17, 1954, the United States Supreme Court declared in the case of Brown v. Board of Education that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal"; and

WHEREAS, although on May 31, 1955, the Supreme Court also ruled that the implementation of desegregation was to occur "with all deliberate speed," a strategy of "Massive Resistance" was instituted to oppose the integration of public schools in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, during the two-year period from 1956 to 1958, Virginia passed "Massive Resistance" legislation that withheld money from any locality that integrated its schools and empowered the governor to close any schools in Virginia that were likely to be desegregated; and

WHEREAS, during this same period, the General Assembly of Virginia deprived the Arlington County School Board of its elective status when it announced a plan of phased desegregation; and

WHEREAS, on September 4, 1958, the governor of Virginia divested the school superintendents of Virginia public schools of the authority to desegregate their schools and advised them that if they contravened his order they would be in violation of Virginia law; and

WHEREAS, during September of 1958, the Commonwealth closed down schools in Front Royal, Charlottesville, and Norfolk to prevent desegregation and locked out nearly 13,000 students statewide from school; and

WHEREAS, active groups of parents in Arlington, Norfolk, and other localities formed public schools committees and joined together to form the Virginia Committee for Public Schools to preserve the public schools for all students in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, on January 19, 1959, both the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals and the United States District Court overturned Virginia's "Massive Resistance" laws, and permanently enjoined state officials from closing a school to avoid desegregation; and

WHEREAS, on February 2, 1959, Stratford Junior High School in Arlington County became the first school in the Commonwealth to be desegregated after "Massive Resistance" with the peaceful admission of four black seventh graders, Ronald Deskins, Michael Jones, Lance Newman, and Gloria Thompson; and

WHEREAS, Norfolk schools were integrated later that same day with the entry of 17 black students into the six white Norfolk secondary schools that had been closed since September 1958; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly commend the Arlington Public Schools on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of public school desegregation in Virginia and recognize the Commonwealth's public schools for their dedication to providing the highest quality education for all Virginia's students, regardless of their race, color, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, or disability; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Arlington Public Schools as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration of the public schools putting into action the United States Supreme Court's decision that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal" and that "separate but equal" has no place in Virginia schools.

ENROLLED

H1816ER