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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 1134

Offered February 18, 2019

Commending the 80th anniversary of the sit-in at the Kate Waller Barrett Branch of the Alexandria Library.

Patrons—Herring, Convirs-Fowler, Hope, Kory, Lindsey, McQuinn and Rodman; Senators: Barker, Boysko, Ebbin, Howell and Marsden

WHEREAS, the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution abolishing slavery was adopted in 1865 but was quickly contravened in the South by Jim Crow laws, which subjected people of color to discrimination and injustice; and

WHEREAS, the constitutionality of the doctrine of "separate but equal" was upheld by the courts and used as the mechanism for enforcing segregation of public facilities; and

WHEREAS, Alexandria established a public library in 1937, limiting membership to white residents of the city; and

WHEREAS, the African American citizens of Alexandria were not only denied membership in the library, but were also denied an equal facility dedicated to the African American community; and

WHEREAS, United States Army Sergeant George Wilson and attorney Samuel W. Tucker applied for and were refused library cards in 1937; and

WHEREAS, Samuel W. Tucker organized a peaceful protest at the library, and six courageous, young African American men—William Evans, Otto Tucker, Edward Gaddis, Morris Murray, Clarence Strange, and Robert Strange—put Samuel Tucker's plan into action; and

WHEREAS, on August 21, 1939, after the young men were denied library privileges at Alexandria's Kate Waller Barrett Library, they refused to comply with the orders to leave the building and were arrested while reading in silent protest in the library's public reading room; and

WHEREAS, after the young men were cleared of all charges of disturbing the peace, the City of Alexandria established the Robinson Library, which was the "separate but equal" facility that served the "colored community" of Alexandria for over 20 years after the 1939 sit-in; and

WHEREAS, the Alexandria Library is commemorating the 80th anniversary of the sit-in throughout 2019 through programming, guest speakers, book displays, performances, and an honorary ceremony; and

WHEREAS, the Alexandria Library Foundation honored the legacy of the peaceful protest, which was ahead of its time, by establishing the Samuel W. Tucker Fund, which provides support for library programming and collections that will center on civil rights, human rights, the African American diaspora, social freedoms, and equality; and

WHEREAS, on August 21, 2019, the Alexandria Library will commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Alexandria Library sit-in for civil rights; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the 80th anniversary of the sit-in at the Kate Waller Barrett Branch of the Alexandria Library be commemorated in 2019; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution to the Mayor of Alexandria as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for the historical significance of the sit-in and so that it may be read and distributed at the August 21, 2019, ceremony.

INTRODUCED

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