

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2007

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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 2165*

Sponsors: Senators Graham; Albertson, Apodaca, Berger of Franklin, Berger of Rockingham, Boseman, Brunstetter, Cowell, Dannelly, Dorsett, East, Foriest, Goodall, Goss, Hagan, Hartsell, Hoyle, Jacumin, Jones, Kerr, Kinnaird, Malone, McKissick, Nesbitt, Preston, Rand, Shaw, Snow, Stevens, and Swindell.

Referred to: Rules and Operations of the Senate.

June 17, 2008

1 A JOINT RESOLUTION COMMEMORATING THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF
2 PUBLIC SCHOOL INTEGRATION IN NORTH CAROLINA.

3 Whereas, the 1954 Brown v. the Board of Education decision of the United
4 States Supreme Court declared that public schools legally segregated by race were and
5 are unconstitutional; and

6 Whereas, Brown v. the Board of Education also declared that separate White,
7 Negro, and Indian schools in North Carolina and other states should be eliminated with
8 "all deliberate speed"; and

9 Whereas, in response to the Brown decision, officials in North Carolina
10 debated the issue of public school integration through executive, legislative, judicial,
11 and constitutional amendment procedures; and

12 Whereas, a special session of the General Assembly was called in the summer
13 of 1956 to respond to the recommendations of the Pearsall Commission; and

14 Whereas, in September of 1956, a set of constitutional amendment proposals
15 were approved by the voting citizens of North Carolina, thus substantially inhibiting and
16 delaying the impact of the Brown decision; and

17 Whereas, local school superintendents Dr. Benjamin Smith, Dr. Elmer
18 Garinger, and Dr. Craig Phillips worked with school boards and community leaders in
19 Greensboro, Charlotte, and Winston-Salem to facilitate the era of public school
20 integration during the summer of 1957; and

21 Whereas, on September 4, 1957, Josephine Boyd (Bradley) at Greensboro
22 Senior High School along with Brenda Florence, Jimmy Florence, Russell Herring,
23 Elijah Herring, and Harold Davis at Gillespie Park Elementary School integrated the
24 previously all-white public schools in Greensboro; and

25 Whereas, on September 4, 1957, Dorothy Counts (Scoggins) at Harding
26 Senior High School, Gustevas Roberts at Central Senior High School, Girvaud Roberts

1 (Justice) at Piedmont Junior High School, and Delois Huntley at Alexander Graham
2 Junior High School integrated the previously all-white public schools in Charlotte; and

3 Whereas, on September 4, 1957, Gwendolyn Bailey (Coleman) integrated the
4 previously all-white Reynolds High School in Winston-Salem; and

5 Whereas, in the book, Greensboro: A Chosen Center, historian Gayle Fripp
6 indicates that Gillespie Park Elementary School became the first integrated elementary
7 school in the southeastern United States; and

8 Whereas, on June 4, 1958, Josephine Boyd (Bradley) of Greensboro Senior
9 High and Ernest Green of Little Rock (AR) Central High School became the first two
10 African-American students to graduate from previously all-white high schools in the
11 South; and

12 Whereas, many different versions of school integration evolved across the
13 State during the decade of the 1960s; and

14 Whereas, full-scale public school integration finally became the operational
15 practice for all of North Carolina's public school districts by 1970; and

16 Whereas, monumental progress has been realized in the continuing quest for
17 equal educational opportunities for North Carolina's school children; and

18 Whereas, 2007-2008 marks the 50th anniversary of the historic 1957-1958
19 school year; Now, therefore,

20 Be it resolved by the Senate, the House of Representatives concurring:

21 **SECTION 1.** The North Carolina General Assembly wishes to
22 commemorate the ongoing progress toward equity and to recognize the bravery that was
23 demonstrated by North Carolinians from multiple ethnic groups a half century ago.

24 **SECTION 2.** The General Assembly honors the memory of Dr. Benjamin
25 Smith, Dr. Elmer Barringer, Russell Herring, Elijah Herring, Harold Davis, and
26 Gustevas Roberts for their roles in helping to integrate North Carolina's schools in 1957.

27 **SECTION 3.** The Secretary of State shall transmit a certified copy of this
28 resolution to the families of the integration pioneers mentioned in this resolution.

29 **SECTION 4.** This resolution is effective upon ratification.