

2022 SESSION

INTRODUCED

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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 150

Offered January 21, 2022

Designating the last Wednesday of April, in 2022 and in each succeeding year, as Barbara Johns Walk to School Day in Virginia.

Patron—Shin

Committee Referral Pending

WHEREAS, Barbara Johns played a unique role in the early years of the Civil Rights movement by leading the only student protest associated with the landmark ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*; and

WHEREAS, Barbara Johns was educated in segregated public schools in Prince Edward County and attended R. R. Moton High School in Farmville, which was designed to hold 180 students but enrolled 477 in 1951; and

WHEREAS, Barbara Johns and other students at R. R. Moton High School struggled with the overcrowded conditions, and the parents of black students appealed to the all-white school board, which constructed tar paper shacks to handle the overflow of students; and

WHEREAS, these inadequate structures were leaky when it rained and cold in the winter and did little to alleviate students' conditions; students were also forced to use textbooks, school supplies, and school busses that had been handed down from all-white schools; and

WHEREAS, in March 1951, a bus transporting R. R. Moton High School students stalled on railroad tracks and was struck by a train, resulting in the deaths of five students, including Barbara Johns's best friend and three children from the same family; and

WHEREAS, frustrated by the school board's lack of action regarding the unequal facilities, Barbara Johns, then a 16-year-old junior at R. R. Moton High School, met with several classmates and planned a student strike to protest the difficult conditions; and

WHEREAS, on April 23, 1951, Barbara Johns delivered a memorandum to teachers announcing a special assembly for students only, then stood at the podium and revealed her plan to strike; and

WHEREAS, the students of R. R. Moton High School agreed to participate in the protest, and Barbara Johns and her fellow strike leaders met with the school superintendent to inform him of the protest and demand a new school; and

WHEREAS, Barbara Johns also sought legal counsel from the NAACP, which agreed to provide assistance as long as a lawsuit would challenge the segregated school system, and the ensuing case of *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County* reached the Supreme Court of the United States along with four other similar cases that formed the bases of the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling; and

WHEREAS, *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County* was the only school integration case initiated by a student strike, making Barbara Johns a pioneer in the peaceful protests that were a hallmark of the Civil Rights movement; and

WHEREAS, April 23 is Barbara Johns Day in Virginia, however a separate day during the school week will provide students an opportunity to honor Barbara Johns for bravely speaking up in support of her fellow students and to reflect on what it means to be a citizen who makes their voice heard and strives to build a stronger community; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly designate the last Wednesday of April, in 2022 and in each succeeding year, as Barbara Johns Walk to School Day in Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit a copy of this resolution to the family of Barbara Johns so that they may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter; and, be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates post the designation of this day on the General Assembly's website.

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