

Chapter No. 2137

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***SENATE***  
***CONCURRENT RESOLUTION***  
***No. 557***

Originated in Senate

*Renald Guyon*

Secretary

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 557

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION DESIGNATING THE SECOND WEEK OF OCTOBER 2011 AS "MISSISSIPPI DISABILITY HEALTH WEEK."

WHEREAS, people with disabilities currently are the largest minority group in the United States with a population of over 54 million; and

WHEREAS, Mississippi has thousands of students enrolled in public school in Grades K through 12 who have some type of disability; and

WHEREAS, during the most part of American history, people with physical, psychiatric, sensory and intellectual disabilities were subjected to a shameful legacy of blatant discrimination and mistreatment by society, including the denial of access to medical and psychological care, forced segregation in institutions without opportunities to be reintegrated back into their communities or to live independently, involuntary sterilization, and the denial of equal opportunity in education, housing and employment; and

WHEREAS, most Mississippians and other Americans are unaware of the significant historic contributions that people with disabilities have made, and are continuing to make today, for the benefit of our nation and the State of Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, many students and other people with disabilities do not have an understanding about their history, including the pioneering efforts that began in the late 1800s to the mid-1900s to enlighten society about humane treatment of people with disabilities, or the emergence of the disability rights movement that began in the 1970s to fight for the civil rights of and equal opportunities for people of disabilities; and

WHEREAS, Mississippi has acknowledged nationwide as a leader on issues affecting people with disabilities and the Center for Independent Living model has been replicated worldwide; and

WHEREAS, the early efforts of the activists in the disability rights movement laid the foundation for future federal and state laws. The disability community has successfully mobilized over the years to enact federal laws to give people with disabilities important civil rights protection. The laws combated forced exclusion, including segregation of people with disabilities in nursing facilities and state institutions, and gave them access to programs and services to acquire the independent living skills and receive the support necessary to live in their own homes or other community living settings. In 1973, Section 504 was added to the federal Rehabilitation Act to prohibit discrimination based on disability by federally funded employers and other entities, and the federal Aid for Highways Act included funding for sidewalk curb cuts. Congress amended the Higher Education Act in 1976 to guarantee equal educational opportunities for physically disabled students; and

WHEREAS, the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires all public schools to address the needs of pupils with disabilities and develop Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) which reflect the specific needs of each pupil. Increasing teachers, pupils, and administrators understanding of the issues confronting the disability community will enhance the quality and relevance of IEPs, and will expand opportunities for pupils with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, early advocacy campaigns continued throughout the 1970s and 1980s and led to the enactment of other major federal laws including, but not limited to, the Developmentally Disabled Assistance and Bill of Rights Act, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, the Fair Housing Amendments Act, and the Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and the Handicapped Act. They also

convinced Congress to enact the omnibus Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; and

WHEREAS, the critical need for a Disability History Week is illustrated by the fact that citizens have consistently questioned why the history of people with disabilities and the disability rights movement is not taught to all pupils in their schools. They represent the needs of the larger disabled pupil population throughout the state that also craves that type of instruction; and

WHEREAS, even today, long after enactment of state and federal laws recognizing the civil rights of people with disabilities, discrimination and exclusion continue. Thus, two decades after the enactment of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act, the vast majority of publicly and privately owned buildings and facilities remain physically inaccessible, and more than two decades after the enactment of the federal Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988, which prohibits discrimination in housing based on disability, the unavailability of accessible housing remains a major barrier to full community inclusion of people with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, disability history should also examine the United States Supreme Court's landmark 1999 opinion in Olmstead v. L.C. In that case, the court ruled that unnecessary segregation and institutionalization of people with disabilities is a form of discrimination under the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Olmstead case is important because it requires states to provide services to people with disabilities in integrated, community-based settings; and

WHEREAS, teaching all students about disability history will promote a greater understanding between those with and without disabilities and will lead to increased opportunities for interaction between students in special education and the general student population. This integration will help form new relationships between students with and without disabilities to

promote a common awareness and understanding of current disability issues. In addition, disability history instruction can help motivate students to follow the lead of prior disability rights activists; and

WHEREAS, knowledge about disability history can also help promote an understanding of the importance of providing opportunities to people with disabilities to develop and apply independent living skills that are critical to personal success in society. If individuals with and without disabilities learn more about the struggle of the disability community, there will be a greater willingness to accommodate everyone's needs. Society will then better appreciate the value to the entire community of including people with disabilities in all aspects of community life; and

WHEREAS, the history of the disability community's civil rights movement will further expand public awareness about all types of disabilities, including those that are both apparent and nonapparent. Paving the way for a better informed society will greatly benefit all people with disabilities by helping them to use education as a tool to reduce misunderstanding that leads to stigmatization, hate crimes, and discrimination; and

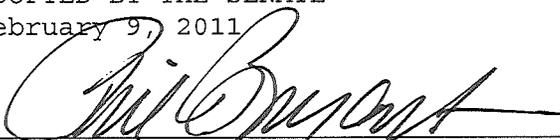
WHEREAS, every person with a disability is entitled to feel a sense of pride about the history of the disability community, their role in their local community, and about themselves as individuals with a disability. As people with and without disabilities learn more about the history of disability, all Mississippians will have a closer connection to the disability community, which will ultimately contribute to a greater appreciation of diversity in our state:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That "Mississippi Disability Health Week" is proclaimed for the second week of the month of October 2011.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we hereby observe and encourage each school district, each community college district, each city and county, public and private institutions of higher education, state and local agencies, nonprofit and community-based organizations, and private businesses and corporations to observe Disability History Week by dedicating appropriate classroom instructional time or by coordinating all-inclusive activities to be observed during that week to afford opportunities for students and the general public to learn more about the disability community and to celebrate and honor its role in contemporary American society.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution shall be transmitted to the Governor, the State Superintendent of Public Schools, the President of the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning, the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges, the Department of Human Services, the Director of the State Department of Rehabilitation, the Director of the Department of Mental Health, the Executive Director of the State Disabilities Council, and made available to the Capitol Press Corps.

ADOPTED BY THE SENATE  
February 9, 2011

  
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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

ADOPTED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
February 16, 2011

  
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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES