

Chapter No. 2110
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**SENATE
CONCURRENT RESOLUTION
No. 574**

Originated in Senate *Zig Welch* Secretary

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 574

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION TO COMMEMORATE THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BEGINNING OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN HOLMES COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI, AND TO RECOGNIZE THE SOCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF FORMER REPRESENTATIVE ROBERT G. CLARK, B.F. MCLAURIN, GRIFFIN MCLAURIN, SR., CATHERINE MCLAURIN, ROSIE HEAD, THELMA HEAD, ELISE GALLEON, ZELMA WILLIAMS, ROSE BERTA CLARK, JOHN D. WESLEY, T.C. JOHNSON, ED MCGAW, JR., WARD MONTGOMERY, JOHN MALONE, WILLIE JAMES BURNS, RALTHUS HAYES, AND MARY LEE HIGHTOWER, ALL INVOLVED AS BLACK CANDIDATES RUNNING IN THE 1967 HOLMES COUNTY GENERAL ELECTION FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE RECONSTRUCTION.

WHEREAS, on February 23, 2014, the citizens of Holmes County, Mississippi, will celebrate the 50th Anniversary of events which were the beginning of the Holmes County Civil Rights Movement with a Black History Month Program at Mt. Calvary Missionary Baptist Church in Tchula, Mississippi. Special Honoree for this commemoration will be Griffin McLaurin, Sr., the first black county elected official in the State of Mississippi, a Civil Rights pioneer, Activist and black farm owner who was elected a young Constable in the 1967 Holmes County General Election; and

WHEREAS, Holmes County civil rights activities started in Mileston in early 1963. No other Mississippi county had as many

independent black farmers as Holmes - 800 black farmers owned 50% of the county's land. The Movement's first catalysts arose from 110 black Mileston landowners. A Mileston farmer and fiery orator, Hartman Turnbow, inspired people during the Movement's first stage. He gave rousing talks in Mileston and at the early countywide meetings; and

WHEREAS, in 1963-1964, establishing the "right to meet" was the crucial first step in getting organized. Meetings are the glue that holds a community together. Song and music protected, cradled, and inspired all those in the Holmes County Civil Rights Movement. Every meeting began and ended with a song, and often the music was able to bring the participants and the community through difficult times; and

WHEREAS, in the 1967 county elections, black candidates ran for the first time since Reconstruction 100 years before. Twenty-two county offices were open from Constable to Sheriff to Mississippi State Representative. Twelve black candidates sought to win 12 of those offices. Ten of the 12 had been Movement leaders since before 1966. The other two were Robert Clark and Robert Smith, both schoolteachers who became active in the Movement in 1966. They were reaching for the highest offices, those of State Representative and Sheriff; and

WHEREAS, eight of the 10 candidates were farmers: T.C. Johnson, Ed McGaw, Jr., Ward Montgomery, John Malone, Willie James Burns, John Daniel Wesley, Griffin McLaurin and Ralthus Hayes.

They sought positions like Supervisor, Justice of the Peace (JP), and Constable in the county's five districts or "beats." Holmes had one female candidate, Mary Lee Hightower, a town dweller, running for county Circuit Clerk. JP candidate Vernon Tom Griffin had no land, but ran his brother's rural store. Of the 12 candidates, two were elected: Griffin McLaurin, Sr., a young constable, and Robert G. Clark, the first and only black in 1967 to sit in the Mississippi House of Representatives; and

WHEREAS, Robert Clark was a popular schoolteacher and coach before he ran and won the position of State Representative in 1967. Coming from a large well-respected, schoolteaching, landowning family in the hills, he was one of the first professionals to be stirred with political aspirations; and

WHEREAS, young people played a significant role in the Holmes Movement. During the Freedom Summer of 1964, more than 500 white and black college students came from all over the country to work in Mississippi. The Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) was the umbrella group created by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to run the Summer Project. Thirty-five COFO students came into Holmes County, with a high priority to work with young people. In 1965, 200 Holmes black children in the first through fourth grades took the path to enroll in and integrate the schools, and in the

following years, more enrolled as the higher grades were gradually added; and

WHEREAS, in the 1960s, churches were the place where people shared their entire lives. We note the historical context and significance of this event and these Holmes County Civil Rights Pioneers who ignited the consciousness of America to its responsibilities:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That we do hereby commemorate and recognize the 50th Anniversary of the Beginning of the Civil Rights Movement in Holmes County, Mississippi, and recognize the social contributions of former Representative Robert G. Clark, B.F. McLaurin, Griffin McLaurin, Sr., Catherine McLaurin, Rosie Head, Thelma Head, Elise Galleon, Zelma Williams, Rose Berta Clark, John D. Wesley, T.C. Johnson, Ed McGaw, Jr., Ward Montgomery, John Malone, Willie James Burns, Ralthus Hayes, and Mary Lee Hightower, all involved as black candidates running in the 1967 Holmes County General Election for the first time since Reconstruction and extend our best wishes to the citizens of Tchula as they remember these Pioneers of the Civil Rights Movement in Holmes County.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to the Pastor of Mt. Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, Griffin

McLaurin, Sr., former Representative Robert G. Clark and made available to the Capitol Press Corps.

ADOPTED BY THE SENATE
February 18, 2014



PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

ADOPTED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
February 20, 2014



SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES