
THIRD READING

Bill No: SR 59
Author: Becker (D), et al.
Introduced: 8/25/21
Vote: Majority

SUBJECT: Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This resolution proclaims November 14, 2021, and each November 14 thereafter, as Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day in the State of California.

ANALYSIS: This resolution makes the following legislative findings.

- 1) On November 14, 1960, six-year-old Ruby Bridges was one of six African American children to pass the test that determined whether or not they could go to the all-White William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans, Louisiana. Of the six children who passed the test, two of the children decided to stay at their old school, and Ruby Bridges went to William Frantz Elementary School by herself, as the only African American pupil to attend the school.
- 2) Every day, United States Marshals had to escort young Ruby and her mother to school, where a crowd of people who did not want her at the school yelled at her. Former United States Deputy Marshal Charles Burks later recalled that Ruby “showed a lot of courage, she never cried, she didn’t whimper, she just marched along like a little soldier”.
- 3) As soon as Ruby entered the school, White parents pulled their own children out, and all the teachers except one refused to teach while a Black child was enrolled in the school. Barbara Henry was the only teacher that would teach Ruby Bridges and for the entire year Ms. Henry taught Ruby Bridges alone in the classroom. Despite the threats and protests, the Bridges family was determined to keep sending Ruby to school and she did not miss a single day of class that year.

- 4) Ms. Bridges went on to graduate from a desegregated high school, become a travel agent, marry, and raise a family; Ms. Bridges also wrote two books about her experiences as a child and she received the Carter G. Woodson Book Award for her work.
- 5) In 1999, Ruby Bridges established the Ruby Bridges Foundation to promote tolerance and create change through education and in 2000, Ms. Bridges was made an honorary deputy marshal in a ceremony in Washington, D.C..
- 6) In 2006, Alameda Unified School District decided to name a new school after Ms. Ruby Bridges as a way to inspire and teach a new generation of pupils about Ms. Bridges' lifelong activism for racial equality.
- 7) Every year on November 14, pupils, staff, and teachers at Ruby Bridges Elementary School and other participating schools honor Ms. Bridges and the courage she carried to walk through the doors of William Frantz Elementary School in 1960 by gathering before school begins, and pupils are asked to line up and walk through the school's gates while teachers, staff, and families welcome the pupils with words of love and encouragement to start the day.

This resolution proclaims November 14, 2021, and each November 14 thereafter, as Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day in the State of California, and in those years when November 14 falls on a Saturday or Sunday, Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day will be celebrated on the following Wednesday.

Comments

The author states, "SR 59 establishes November 14 as Ruby Bridges Walk to School Day to commemorate Ruby Bridges, who in 1960 became one of the first Black students to integrate in the South. At the tender age of six, U.S Federal Marshals escorted Ruby Bridges had to her all-white school. On that day, what she believed to be a rambunctious crowd of celebrating adults was in reality an angry white mob. Undeterred, Ruby Bridges continued her education at her new school. The images captured on her first day motivated a country to reevaluate school segregation and racial equality. Ruby Bridges is a continuing reminder that our children can be courageous and stand up to injustice with dignity and grace."

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: No Local: No

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/31/21)

None received

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/31/21)

None received

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