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SR-59 (2021-2022)

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ENROLLED SEPTEMBER 14, 2021

PASSED IN SENATE SEPTEMBER 10, 2021

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2021–2022 REGULAR SESSION

SENATE RESOLUTION

NO. 59

Introduced by Senator Becker

(Coauthors: Senators Allen, Borgeas, Bradford, Caballero, Dodd, Durazo, Grove, Hurtado, Jones, Kamlager, Leyva, Limón, Melendez, Nielsen, Portantino, Skinner, Wiener, and Wilk)

August 25, 2021

Relative to Ruby Bridges Day.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SR 59, Becker.

WHEREAS, 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; and

WHEREAS, 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; and

WHEREAS, 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; and

WHEREAS, 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”; and

WHEREAS, As soon as Ruby Bridges 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; and

WHEREAS, Barbara Henry, originally from Boston, Massachusetts, was the only teacher that would teach Ruby Bridges and for the entire year Ms. Henry taught Ruby Bridges alone in the classroom; and

WHEREAS, There were threats to poison Ruby's food, so the United States Marshals assigned to protect her only allowed her to eat food brought from home; and

WHEREAS, The threats to Ruby extended to her family as well; her father lost his job and the grocery store where the family shopped would no longer let them shop there, and her grandparents who were sharecroppers in Mississippi were turned off their land; and

WHEREAS, 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; and

WHEREAS, Over time, other African American pupils enrolled in William Frantz Elementary School, and many years later Ruby Bridges' four nieces attended the school made famous by their brave Aunt Ruby; and

WHEREAS, In 1964, artist Norman Rockwell celebrated Ruby Bridges' courage with a painting of Ruby's first day of school entitled "The Problem We All Live With"; and

WHEREAS, 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; and

WHEREAS, 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.; and

WHEREAS, In 2006, Alameda Unified School District decided to name a new school located on the west end of the city after Ms. Ruby Bridges as a way to inspire and teach a new generation of pupils about Ms. Bridges' lifelong activism for racial equality; and

WHEREAS, 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; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, That the Senate 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; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.