

House Resolution 661

By: Representative Cheokas of the 138th

A RESOLUTION

1 Recognizing and honoring the 1963 Leesburg Stockade Women, heroes of the American
2 Civil Rights Movement; and for other purposes.

3 WHEREAS, while struggling for justice and racial equality during the 1963 Civil Rights
4 Movement in Americus, Georgia, 14 young girls from the ages of ten to fifteen dared to
5 speak out, and, in response to their actions, these girls were illegally arrested and held captive
6 in an old Civil War era abandoned stockade, deep in the woods of Leesburg, Georgia; and

7 WHEREAS, these brave adolescent girls were unjustly imprisoned for two months in the cell
8 block of the Leesburg Stockade where they endured horrendous, inhumane conditions,
9 including little food, contaminated drinking water, no working toilet, no personal hygiene
10 or medical supplies, and sleeping on a cold cement floor without pillows or blankets; and

11 WHEREAS, during this nightmare, the parents of the captive girls had no knowledge of why
12 their daughters were being held hostage or where they were imprisoned, and for those
13 seemingly endless two months the girls' parents suffered the uncertainty of not knowing if
14 their beloved daughters were even still alive; and

15 WHEREAS, the names of these Civil Rights heroes are: Dr. Shirley Green-Reese, Willie
16 Mae Smith-Davis, Carol Barner-Seay, Melinda Jones-Williams, Verna Hollis, Billie Jo
17 Thornton-Allen, Diane Dorsey-Bowens, Lula Westbrook-Griffin, Laura Ruff-Saunders,
18 Pearl Brown (deceased), Mattie Crittenden (deceased), Sandra Russell-Mansfield (deceased),
19 Annie Lou Ragans-Laster (deceased), and Gloria Westbrook (deceased); and

20 WHEREAS, in honor of the 1963 Leesburg Stockade Women, the Boys & Girls Club of
21 Americus-Sumter County is sponsoring a program to commemorate their bravery and thank
22 them for their sacrifice; and

23 WHEREAS, the legacy of these 14 African-American female adolescents will be celebrated
24 at Georgia Southwestern State University on Saturday, April 4, 2015, at 1:00 p.m., and, lest
25 not we forget, at this historical ceremony the survivors will share with their audience
26 accounts of their inhumane treatment as well as how this horrifying event affected each of
27 their lives; and

28 WHEREAS, it is hoped that the memory of this atrocity will dissuade future generations
29 from performing such injustices and that one day inhumane treatment like this will be
30 eradicated worldwide; and

31 WHEREAS, it is abundantly fitting and proper to recognize the struggles of the 1963
32 Leesburg Stockade Women, as their history reminds us all how the fight for freedom is won
33 by the strength of even the smallest of souls and justice may be guarded even by the will of
34 a child.

35 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that
36 the members of this body recognize the 1963 Leesburg Stockade Women in honor of their
37 April 4, 2015, commemorative ceremony at Georgia Southwestern State University and
38 extend their most sincere best wishes to these precious Civil Rights heroes and their proud
39 family members.

40 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized
41 and directed to make appropriate copies of this resolution available for distribution to each
42 of the 14 women of the 1963 Leesburg Stockade Women or their surviving family members.