

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 52

By Turner J

A RESOLUTION to create a special joint committee to study issues relating to certain unsolved civil rights crimes.

WHEREAS, during the "activist civil rights era" of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, vigilantes, including both groups and individuals, did violently assault, maim, and kill African American Tennesseans who were exercising their rights as citizens; and

WHEREAS, law enforcement agencies and the criminal justice system failed to hold these vigilantes accountable for the deaths of many African American and white activists and others during the civil rights era; and

WHEREAS, there is a need for law enforcement and the State of Tennessee to expeditiously investigate unsolved civil rights murders, due to the amount of time that has passed since these murders and the age of potential witnesses, and to provide all the resources necessary to ensure timely and thorough investigations in the cases involved; and

WHEREAS, a sense of justice and moral outrage calls upon this body to examine issues raised by these unsolved cold cases of the civil rights era; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that there is hereby created a special joint committee to study issues relating to the investigation and prosecution of unsolved civil rights crimes and cold cases from the civil rights era.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the committee shall make recommendations concerning the desirability of a statutorily established commission or other appropriate means to conduct investigations and prosecutions of these heinous civil rights crimes that may still take place.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the special joint committee shall consist of three (3) members of the house of representatives and three (3) members of the senate, to be appointed by the respective speakers.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all appropriate state agencies shall provide assistance to the special joint committee upon request of the chair.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all legislative members of the special joint committee who are duly elected members of the general assembly shall remain members of such committee until the committee reports its findings and recommendations to the general assembly.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the special joint committee shall be convened by the member with the most years of continuous service in the general assembly, and at its first meeting shall elect a chair, vice-chair, and such other officers the committee deems necessary.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the special joint committee shall timely report its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the One Hundred Seventh General Assembly no later than January 14, 2014, at which time the committee shall cease to exist.