

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. RES. 1359

Condemning the atrocities that occurred in New Orleans, Louisiana, on July 30, 1866, in which a White supremacist mob brutalized, terrorized, and killed dozens of Black Americans, and reaffirming the commitment of the House of Representatives to supporting the fundamental right to vote and to combating hatred, injustice, and White supremacy.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 15, 2024

Mr. CARTER of Louisiana (for himself and Ms. WILLIAMS of Georgia) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

RESOLUTION

Condemning the atrocities that occurred in New Orleans, Louisiana, on July 30, 1866, in which a White supremacist mob brutalized, terrorized, and killed dozens of Black Americans, and reaffirming the commitment of the House of Representatives to supporting the fundamental right to vote and to combating hatred, injustice, and White supremacy.

Whereas, throughout United States history, people organizing and advocating for civil rights, especially for Black Americans, have faced deadly violence or the threat thereof;

Whereas, in the aftermath of the Civil War, numerous States passed “Black Codes” that aimed to disenfranchise Black Americans and limit the rights of former slaves;

Whereas, in 1864, a Constitutional Convention in Louisiana adopted a new State constitution that abolished slavery but did not recognize Black people’s right to vote;

Whereas, in December 1865, the General Assembly of Louisiana passed a series of laws that amounted to a “Black Code”, restricting the freedom of former slaves and cementing White supremacist rule;

Whereas the provisions of Louisiana’s Black Code conflicted with the soon-to-be-passed Civil Rights Act of 1866;

Whereas spring 1866 elections in Louisiana resulted in many ex-Confederates winning seats over pro-Union and pro-voting rights candidates;

Whereas, in June 1866, 2 weeks after Congress’s passage of the 14th Amendment, several original convention members and Louisiana Governor J. Madison Wells called for 1864 Convention members to meet to discuss the possibility of reconvening the 1864 Constitutional Convention to revise the State constitution;

Whereas Historian Gilles Vandal asserted that “The Civil Rights Act and its enforcement became closely connected to the controversial question of reconvening the 1864 Convention in late July 1866”;

Whereas, on July 27, 1866, Governor Wells appointed Louisiana Supreme Court Judge R.K. Howell President pro tempore of the 1864 Convention, who in turn called for the Convention to reconvene on July 30, 1866, after the previous president of the Convention refused to recall the Convention;

Whereas New Orleans Mayor John T. Monroe, who had been previously removed from office for refusing to pledge loyalty to the Union, declared the Convention an “unlawful assemblage”;

Whereas, in advance of the Convention and foreseeing potential violence, the local army commander requested permission to intervene in the case of violence; President Johnson failed to provide such an order;

Whereas, on July 30, 1866, 25 members of the Convention gathered at the Mechanic’s Institute in New Orleans to reconvene the Convention of 1864, but they failed to meet the quorum.

Whereas a group of approximately 200 unarmed Black Americans, many of whom were veterans, marched up Burgundy Street to the Mechanic’s Institute to demonstrate support of the Convention’s intended expansion of the franchise, and protesters opposing the goals of the convention also gathered outside the Institute at the corner of Common and Dryades Streets;

Whereas taunting and vitriol directed at the Black marchers led to an initial exchange of violence;

Whereas police monitoring the Institute began firing on the marchers, and protesters and police besieged the Convention attendees inside the Institute;

Whereas 2 to 3 hours of brutal violence led to an official total of 38 individuals killed and 146 wounded, with 34 of the dead and 119 of the wounded being Black and 3 of the dead being White Convention delegates, and some unofficial estimates have the number of Black Americans dead much higher;

Whereas 261 Black and 4 White Americans were arrested for rioting;

Whereas General Absalom Baird, who had denied Mayor Monroe's request for help in arresting the Convention delegates, wired to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton that afternoon, "Immediately after this riot assumed a serious character, the police, aided by the citizens, became the assailants, and from the evidence I am forced to believe, exercised great brutality in making their arrests. Finally, they attacked the Convention hall and a protracted struggle ensued. The people inside the hall gave up some who surrendered, and were attacked afterward and brutally treated.";

Whereas, in reporting to Ulysses S. Grant at the Department of War, General Philip Sheridan noted that the peaceful delegates and supporters were attacked "with fire-arms, clubs, and knives, in a manner so unnecessary and atrocious as to compel me to say that it was murder . . . It was no riot. It was an absolute massacre by the police, which was not excelled in murderous cruelty by that of Fort Pillow. It was a murder which the Mayor and police of the city perpetrated without the shadow of a necessity.";

Whereas opposition to the violence inflicted upon people attempting to ensure voting rights for Black Americans during the New Orleans Riots was a major issue in the election of 1866, and spurred the election of Presidential-veto-proof, pro-civil rights congressional majorities;

Whereas, on December 6, 1866, the House of Representatives established a Select Committee to investigate the New Orleans Riots;

Whereas, on February 11, 1867, the Committee released its report saying in part “in view of the facts proved we are constrained to say that the time has fully arrived when Congress should intervene and should so legislate as to secure to the people of Louisiana a republican form of government . . . Until a loyal State of Louisiana exists in full political accord with the United States, and the demand of the Constitution is complied with that a government in republican form shall be guaranteed to the State, the objects of the war will not have been attained.”;

Whereas, on March 2, 1867, Congress overrode a Presidential veto to enact the First Reconstruction Act, which divided the former Confederate States into 5 military zones and set conditions for readmission, including requiring each southern State to draft a new State constitution that enfranchised Black male voters and required the southern States to ratify the 14th Amendment;

Whereas, upon taking control of New Orleans under the Reconstruction Act, General Sheridan dismissed Mayor Monroe for his role in the New Orleans Riots;

Whereas discussion of the New Orleans Riots was a significant driver of and a major part of the congressional debate about the First Reconstruction Act;

Whereas a number of historians have asserted that the brutality and horror of the New Orleans Riots of 1866 gave impetus to the passage of the Reconstruction Acts, and ultimately ratification of the 14th and 15th Amendments; and

Whereas the New Orleans Riots were just a small part of a broader campaign of violence designed to prevent Black

Americans from having their right to vote recognized:
Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) condemns the actions of the White su-
3 premacist mob that massacred voting rights orga-
4 nizers in New Orleans, Louisiana, on July 30, 1866;

5 (2) honors the memory of the victims and ac-
6 knowledges the lasting impact that this incident has
7 had on the Black community of New Orleans, Lou-
8 isiana;

9 (3) recognizes that the Federal legislation cata-
10 lyzed by the New Orleans Riots, including the Re-
11 construction Act, the 14th Amendment, and the
12 15th Amendment, are centerpieces of the United
13 States attempt at inclusive, accessible, multiracial
14 democracy;

15 (4) recognizes that the goals of the legislation
16 catalyzed by the New Orleans Riots are still unreal-
17 ized, and reaffirms the commitment of the Federal
18 Government to the goals of meaningful universal
19 voting rights held by the Convention delegates and
20 their supporters;

21 (5) expresses support for the designation of a
22 national day of remembrance for the victims of the
23 campaign of violence that attempted to deny the

1 right to vote of Black Americans throughout United
2 States history; and

3 (6) reaffirms the commitment of the Federal
4 Government to combat White supremacy and seek
5 reconciliation for racial injustice.

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