

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 144

Recognizing and celebrating the 70th anniversary of the 1953 Baton Rouge
Bus Boycott.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 21, 2023

Mr. CARTER of Louisiana submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary, and in addition to the Committee on Natural Resources, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

RESOLUTION

Recognizing and celebrating the 70th anniversary of the
1953 Baton Rouge Bus Boycott.

Whereas, in 1950, the Baton Rouge city council revoked the licenses of nearly 40 Black-owned bus services, which transported residents to and from Black neighborhoods, jobs, and businesses within the city;

Whereas the bus companies pledged to provide full and fair services to all riders, but the realities of segregation would make that pledge nearly impossible to keep;

Whereas racial segregation was a pervading and inherent part of life in the South, and the city buses in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, were a microcosm of the segregated society of the South;

Whereas, in 1953, the Black residents of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, took a courageous first step and staged the Nation's first large-scale bus boycott, challenging segregation;

Whereas, during this time, Black bus passengers in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, were required to sit in the rear of the bus, to give up seats to White passengers, and, after paying their fare at the front of the bus, to exit and reenter the bus through the back door;

Whereas, during this time, 70 percent of the Baton Rouge bus companies' business came from Black passengers;

Whereas, during this time, Black residents in Baton Rouge knew that protesting their unequal treatment could cause them to become victims of economic boycotts, violence, or other forms of intentional misconduct;

Whereas Martha White and other Black bus passengers were told to get up on a crowded bus by a White bus driver;

Whereas every Black passenger on the bus that day stuck together and refused to get off the bus;

Whereas the police were called to arrest the Black bus passengers, causing a walk out and a 4-day strike on local bus services;

Whereas Black church and civic leaders from all over Baton Rouge came together to form the United Defense League, with Rev. T.J. Jemison as president;

Whereas the United Defense League decided that nobody was going to ride the bus the next morning, prompting Black residents across Baton Rouge to carpool with each other;

Whereas this action cost bus companies \$1,600 a day with no Black passengers due to the boycott and ceased bus operations across the city;

Whereas the boycott's success reached far beyond the Baton Rouge city limits and gave Black people across the Nation inspiration and hope, setting the tone for the civil rights movement;

Whereas the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott represents the first large-scale, extended effort by Black people to successfully challenge discrimination and segregation; and

Whereas, in 1956, 3 years after the Baton Rouge bus strike, the Supreme Court outlawed racial segregation on buses:
Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) recognizes and celebrates the 70th anniversary of the 1953 Baton Rouge Bus Boycott, to provide an opportunity for the people of the United States to learn more about the past and to better understand the experiences that have shaped the Nation;

8 (2) recognizes the historical significance of this milestone of the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott;

10 (3) reaffirms its commitment that history should be regarded as a means for understanding the past and solving the challenges of the future; and

14 (4) expresses support for the Secretary of the Interior to explore how to provide appropriate mark-

- 1 ings to identify places associated with the Baton
- 2 Rouge Bus Boycott.

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