



HR0244

LRB100 11978 KLG 23888 r

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The 1917 East St. Louis Race Riot, also known as the East St. Louis Massacres, was one of the worst race riots in American history; and

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WHEREAS, Shortly after America's entry into World War I, when black troops were going to fight to make the world safe for democracy, American black men, women, and children were murdered in the most wanton and barbaric manner in the streets of East St. Louis on July 2 and 3, 1917; and

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WHEREAS, In 1917, East St. Louis was crowded with factories and jobs were abundant; but as World War I halted the flow of immigration from Eastern Europe and white workers, increasingly frustrated by poor wages and working conditions were beginning to unionize, factory recruiters started looking toward the American South for black workers; by the spring of 1917, about 2,000 African Americans were arriving in East St. Louis every week in what became known as the Great Migration; as competition for jobs increased, a labor issue became a racial issue fraught with animus and rising tensions; and

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WHEREAS, On May 28, 1917, several blacks were attacked after a union rally sparking a night of rioting; the National Guard broke it up the next day and stayed in the city until

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1 mid-June; the tensions boiled over on July 2, 1917 following a
2 confrontation in a black neighborhood that began after white
3 men in a car drove by shooting into buildings, houses, and
4 churches, and ended with two white police officers dead; and

5 WHEREAS, Mobs of white men, some assisted by women and even
6 children, set fires in black neighborhoods, trapping people in
7 their homes and shooting those who tried to escape; black
8 passengers were pulled from trolley cars and beaten in the
9 street; black men were dragged through the streets and hanged
10 by light poles along the streets where they remained for days;
11 accounts speak of black men, women, and children beaten with
12 bludgeons, stoned, shot, drowned, hanged, or burned to death,
13 without any effective interference on the part of the police,
14 sheriff, or military authorities; and

15 WHEREAS, Media accounts state the National Guard was only
16 able to begin to gain control of the crowd on July 3, 1917 when
17 "the rioters had exhausted themselves and sated, in a measure,
18 their lust for blood"; the first full day of calm was July 4,
19 1917; and

20 WHEREAS, At the end of the mayhem, nine whites and nearly
21 200 blacks were dead, more than 300 buildings were destroyed,
22 with fires causing \$8,000,000 in 2017 dollars in damage; 6,000
23 people fled from their homes; and

1 WHEREAS, The East St. Louis 1917 Centennial Commission and
2 Cultural Initiative will be observing the centennial with
3 several activities and events to promote remembrance, healing,
4 and awareness of the 1917 Race Riot and its social, political,
5 and cultural impact on our nation; and to celebrate the great
6 fortitude found in the people of East St. Louis; therefore, be
7 it

8 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
9 HUNDREDTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we
10 acknowledge a moral imperative to never forget the atrocities
11 that took place on July 2 and 3, 1917 in East St. Louis; and be
12 it further

13 RESOLVED, That we observe May 28, 2017 as a day of
14 remembrance in the State of Illinois on the centennial of the
15 events that precipitated the 1917 East St. Louis Race Riot; and
16 be it further

17 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
18 presented Marla Byrd, Commissioner of the East St. Louis 1917
19 Centennial Commission and Cultural Initiative.