

1 SJR80
2 218754-1
3 By Senators Allen, Singleton, Smitherman, Figures,
4 Coleman-Madison, Albritton, Barfoot, Beasley, Butler,
5 Chambliss, Chesteen, Dunn, Elliott, Givhan, Gudger, Hatcher,
6 Holley, Jones, Livingston, Marsh, McClendon, Melson, Orr,
7 Price, Reed, Roberts, Sanders-Fortier, Scofield, Sessions,
8 Shelnutt, Stutts, Waggoner, Weaver, Whatley and Williams
9 RFD:
10 First Read: 15-MAR-22

MOURNING THE PASSING OF MRS. AUTHERINE LUCY FOSTER,
THE FIRST BLACK STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA.

WHEREAS, it is with profound sadness that we note
the death on March 2, 2022, of Mrs. Autherine Lucy Foster of
at the age of 92 years; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Foster had no particular desire to be
a civil rights pioneer; growing up as the youngest of 10
children in an Alabama farm family, she simply wanted to get
the best education her state could offer; and

WHEREAS, she obtained a Bachelor's Degree in English
from the historically Black Miles College in Fairfield,
Alabama, in 1962; but then, though she was a reserved, shy
person, she took a daring step: She applied for entrance to
her state's flagship educational institution, The University
of Alabama, and was accepted - at least until university
officials discovered she was Black and promptly told her that
a mistake had been made and she would not be welcome; and

WHEREAS, so began the legal fight that culminated in
1956, nearly two years after the Supreme Court found

1 segregation in public schools and colleges unconstitutional in
2 the landmark Brown V. Board of Education decision, when Ms.
3 Lucy became the first Black student at Alabama; and

4 WHEREAS, her case was the first to test the Supreme
5 Court's decree giving Federal District Court judges the
6 authority to implement the Brown decision, and she was beaten
7 back; but when she died at home in Lipscomb, Alabama, she was
8 remembered for her courage and dignity in waging a fight that
9 led directly to sustained integration at Alabama seven years
10 later, in the face of Governor George C. Wallace's notorious
11 "stand in the schoolhouse door" defiance; and

12 WHEREAS, Mrs. Lucy married Hugh Lawrence Foster, a
13 divinity student, in April 1956, and they moved to Texas; she
14 sought teaching posts, but, as she recalled, interviewers
15 would say to her, "You were the infamous Miss Lucy, and we
16 don't want you to come to our school"; she eventually did
17 teach at various schools in the South, but largely faded from
18 the civil rights scene while her husband pursued his Baptist
19 ministry and they reared a family; and

20 WHEREAS, The University of Alabama did not drop its
21 ban on Autherine Lucy; afterwards as a graduate student, she
22 attended commencement ceremonies and received a Master's
23 Degree in Education while her daughter, Grazia, received her
24 Bachelor's Degree in Corporate Finance; she said that she was
25 still bitter over her treatment, but refused to spend time
26 thinking about it; and

1 WHEREAS, in November 2010, the university dedicated
2 the Autherine Lucy Clock Tower; in 2019, she was awarded an
3 honorary doctorate by the university; and less than three
4 weeks before she died, the university named the building of
5 its College of Education in her honor; it had earlier been
6 named for David Bibb Graves, a former Alabama governor and Ku
7 Klux Klan leader; and

8 WHEREAS, survivors include her children, Angela
9 Dickerson, Grazia Kungu and Chrystal Foster; six
10 grandchildren, and one great-grandchild; now therefore,

11 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA, BOTH
12 HOUSES THEREOF CONCURRING, That the death of Mrs. Autherine
13 Lucy Foster is recorded with deep sadness, and this resolution
14 is offered in tribute to her life and with heartfelt sympathy
15 to her family, whose grief is shared by many.