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1 HR96

2 U99QPGG-1

3 By Representatives Ensler, Hassell, McClammy, Lawrence, Morris

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5 RFD:

6 First Read: 27-Feb-25



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HR_____ COMMEMORATING MARCH 2, 2025, AS THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY
OF CLAUDETTE COLVIN'S REFUSAL TO GIVE UP HER BUS SEAT.

WHEREAS, with great pleasure and pride, we
commemorate the 70th Anniversary of Claudette Colvin's
refusal to give up her bus seat in Montgomery, Alabama, on
March 2, 1955, and we find it fitting and proper to recount
the accomplishments and sacrifices of Ms. Claudette Colvin;
and

WHEREAS, Claudette Colvin was born in Birmingham,
Alabama, on September 5, 1939, to C.P. Austin and Mary Jane
Austin (Gadson); she is the oldest of eight sisters; during
her early childhood, her adopted parents, Q.P. and Mary Ann
Colvin, lived in the rural community of Pine Level, Alabama;
Ms. Colvin attended the Springhill Baptist Elementary
School, then located on Ramer Route 1; later, Ms. Colvin
moved to the King Hill community of the state capital,
Montgomery; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Colvin was arrested for a felony at the
age of fifteen, after refusing to give up her seat to a
young, white passenger on March 2, 1955, in Montgomery, nine
months before the arrest of Rosa Parks; and

WHEREAS, her arrest sparked a successful lawsuit led
by famed Civil Rights Attorney, Fred D. Gray; Ms. Colvin,
along with Aurelia Browder, Susie McDonald, and Mary Louise



HR96 INTRODUCED

29 Smith, were plaintiffs in what would become the Supreme
30 Court case, *Browder v. Gayle*; at the age of 16, she gave
31 pivotal testimony that led the United States District Court
32 for the Middle District of Alabama to issue a ruling
33 declaring the state's laws mandating bus segregation as
34 unconstitutional; the United States Supreme Court upheld
35 this ruling and on December 20, 1956, ordered the State of
36 Alabama and the City of Montgomery to end bus segregation
37 permanently; and

38 WHEREAS, Ms. Colvin did not finish her senior year of
39 high school, partially due to her dedication to the social
40 justice movement; she worked hard to earn her General
41 Education Diploma and attended the Alabama State Teachers
42 College in Montgomery; and

43 WHEREAS, Ms. Colvin's legacy simmered quietly until,
44 as early as 1979, her name began surfacing during Negro
45 History Month; Frank Sikora of the Birmingham News wrote a
46 feature story on her in 1980; in 1990, New York Governor,
47 Mario M. Cuomo, awarded her with the MLK, Jr. Medal of
48 Freedom, New York State's highest honor of recognition for
49 outstanding accomplishments in civil and human rights; the
50 Selma Times-Journal featured her in 1991; the National
51 Voting Rights Museum and Institute added a picture display
52 dedicated to Ms. Colvin in 1994; Lifetime Television
53 featured her story in 1995; she was featured in the cover
54 stories of USA Today, the Montgomery Advertiser, and the
55 Washington Post; she has been mentioned in several books,
56 including "Freedom's Children" by Ellen Levine, "Parting the



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57 Waters" by Taylor Branch, and "Bus Ride to Justice" by
58 Attorney Fred D. Gray; Phillip Hoose's 2009 biography,
59 Claudette Colvin, Twice Toward Justice" received the
60 Newberry Honor Book Award; and most recently, she
61 co-authored the children's book, "Claudette Colvin: I Want
62 Freedom Now!" with Phillip Hoose and illustrated by Bea
63 Jackson; and

64 WHEREAS, despite many considering Ms. Colvin's 1955
65 act of civil disobedience to be the greatest achievement in
66 her life, Ms. Colvin always kept her eye on the future,
67 "paying it forward" to the next generation; by sharing her
68 story, she has empowered parents, community leaders, and
69 public officials to become agents of change; she created the
70 Claudette Colvin Foundation with the mission to inspire and
71 recognize youth and young adults for their service in
72 significantly improving life in communities across America;
73 her giving spirit is also shown by the success of her
74 descendants; she is the mother of two boys, the eldest of
75 whom sadly passed at her home in 1993; her youngest son
76 earned his Doctorate in Business Administration from
77 Kennesaw State University and is now an Assistant Professor
78 at Texas A&M University - Kingsville; she has several
79 grandchildren and great-grandchildren and often says she
80 "reaps the fruits of her labors" through her growing family
81 and those others whom she inspired; and

82 WHEREAS, because of her arrest, Ms. Colvin lost her
83 civil rights and liberties, including the right to vote; in
84 2021, she petitioned the juvenile court in Montgomery to



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85 expunge her record; 66 years after her arrest, her record
86 was expunged by Judge Calvin Williams who lauded her actions
87 as courageous; now therefore,

88 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
89 LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA, That Claudette Colvin is commended
90 for her courage and bravery, which resulted in an organized
91 bus boycott and the Supreme Court ruling that segregation in
92 public transportation is unconstitutional, and March 2,
93 2025, is hereby commemorated as the 70th Anniversary of her
94 historic action to protest injustice.