

**HR16 INTRODUCED**



1 HR16

2 NRCH7J8-1

3 By Representatives Ensler, Lawrence, McClammy, Gray, Hollis,  
4 McCampbell, Travis, Clarke, Forte, Lands, Hendrix, Datcher,  
5 Morris, Givan, Jackson, Hall

6 RFD:

7 First Read: 14-Jan-26



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4 HR\_\_\_\_\_ CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF CLAUDETTE COLVIN.

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6 WHEREAS, with an overwhelming sense of loss, we mourn  
7 the death, yet celebrate the life, of Claudette Colvin of  
8 Birmingham, Alabama, whose passing has left a void in the  
9 lives of her family and friends; and

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

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

23 WHEREAS, her arrest sparked a successful lawsuit led  
24 by famed Civil Rights Attorney, Fred D. Gray; Ms. Colvin,  
25 along with Aurelia Browder, Susie McDonald, and Mary Louise  
26 Smith, were plaintiffs in what would become the Supreme  
27 Court case, Browder v. Gayle; at the age of 16, she gave  
28 pivotal testimony that led the United States District Court

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29 for the Middle District of Alabama to issue a ruling  
30 declaring the state's laws mandating bus segregation as  
31 unconstitutional; the United States Supreme Court upheld  
32 this ruling and on December 20, 1956, ordered the State of  
33 Alabama and the City of Montgomery to end bus segregation  
34 permanently; and

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

40 WHEREAS, Ms. Colvin's legacy simmered quietly until,  
41 as early as 1979, her name began surfacing during Negro  
42 History Month; Frank Sikora of the Birmingham News wrote a  
43 feature story on her in 1980; in 1990, New York Governor,  
44 Mario M. Cuomo, awarded her with the MLK, Jr. Medal of  
45 Freedom, New York State's highest honor of recognition for  
46 outstanding accomplishments in civil and human rights; the  
47 Selma Times-Journal featured her in 1991; the National  
48 Voting Rights Museum and Institute added a picture display  
49 dedicated to Ms. Colvin in 1994; Lifetime Television  
50 featured her story in 1995; she was featured in the cover  
51 stories of USA Today, the Montgomery Advertiser, and the  
52 Washington Post; she has been mentioned in several books,  
53 including "Freedom's Children" by Ellen Levine, "Parting the  
54 Waters" by Taylor Branch, and "Bus Ride to Justice" by  
55 Attorney Fred D. Gray; Phillip Hoose's 2009 biography,  
56 Claudette Colvin, Twice Toward Justice" received the

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57 Newberry Honor Book Award; and most recently, she  
58 co-authored the children's book, "Claudette Colvin: I Want  
59 Freedom Now!" with Phillip Hoose and illustrated by Bea  
60 Jackson; and

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

79 WHEREAS, because of her arrest, Ms. Colvin lost her  
80 civil rights and liberties, including the right to vote; in  
81 2021, she petitioned the juvenile court in Montgomery to  
82 expunge her record; 66 years after her arrest, her record  
83 was expunged by Judge Calvin Williams who lauded her actions  
84 as courageous; now therefore,

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85           BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
86    LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA, That the death of Claudette Colvin  
87    is recorded with deep sadness, and even as we mourn her  
88    death, we also celebrate her life; this resolution is  
89    offered in highest tribute, along with heartfelt sympathy to  
90    her family, whose grief is shared by many.