



576-03903-20

Proposed Committee Substitute by the Committee on Appropriations
(Appropriations Subcommittee on Criminal and Civil Justice)

A bill to be entitled

An act relating to the 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots;
directing the Commissioner of Education's African
American History Task Force to determine ways in which
the 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots may be included in
required instruction on African-American history;
requiring the task force to submit recommendations to
the commissioner and the State Board of Education by a
specified date; directing the Secretary of State to
take certain action regarding the inclusion of the
history of the 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots in museum
exhibits; directing the Secretary of Environmental
Protection to assess naming opportunities for state
parks, or a portion of a facility therein, in
recognizing victims of the 1920 Ocoee Election Day
Riots; authorizing the secretary to appoint a
committee to assist in assessing naming opportunities;
requiring the secretary to submit recommendations to
the Legislature under specified circumstances;
encouraging district school boards to assess naming
opportunities for school facilities in recognizing
victims of the 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots;
providing an effective date.

WHEREAS, in the decades following the conclusion of
Reconstruction, Jim Crow laws were enacted throughout the
southern United States, including Florida, which mandated



576-03903-20

28 segregation and imposed numerous restrictions, such as the
29 imposition of poll taxes and literacy requirements, thereby
30 suppressing the ability of African Americans to participate in
31 the democratic process, and

32 WHEREAS, throughout the country, organizations such as the
33 Ku Klux Klan staged rallies, marches, and other demonstrations
34 in an effort to intimidate African Americans and any allies from
35 organizing and attempting to exercise the right to vote, and

36 WHEREAS, as the 1920 presidential election approached,
37 efforts were undertaken in Orange County by numerous
38 organizations and individuals, including Judge John M. Cheney
39 and two prominent African-American residents of Ocoee, Julius
40 "July" Perry and Moses Norman, to register African-American
41 voters to allow for their participation in the upcoming
42 election, and

43 WHEREAS, on November 2, 1920, as several African Americans
44 in Ocoee, including Moses Norman, unsuccessfully attempted to
45 vote on Election Day, violence ensued as a mob of approximately
46 100 white men formed and marched to Julius "July" Perry's
47 residence, and proceeded to open gunfire as Julius "July" Perry
48 attempted to defend himself along with his property and family,
49 and

50 WHEREAS, after the Perry family eventually fled the
51 residence, Julius "July" Perry was soon arrested and
52 subsequently shot and lynched after the mob gained access to his
53 jail cell with the aid of local law enforcement, and

54 WHEREAS, the violence spread throughout the African-
55 American community of Ocoee and upwards of 60 people are
56 estimated to have perished while dozens of homes, two churches,



576-03903-20

57 and a lodge meeting hall were set ablaze and gunfire overtook
58 the community, and

59 WHEREAS, in the aftermath of the riots, nearly all African-
60 American residents of the community were forced to flee,
61 abandoning their residences and property and relocating
62 elsewhere, and

63 WHEREAS, there is no record that state or local government
64 officials took any action to prevent the tragedy that occurred
65 in Ocoee, or reasonably investigated the matter in the riot's
66 aftermath in an effort to bring the perpetrators of the incident
67 to justice or to allow the displaced African-American residents
68 to return to their homes and property, and

69 WHEREAS, in November 2018, the Ocoee City Commission
70 adopted a proclamation that acknowledged the acts of domestic
71 terror inflicted upon the African-American residents of Ocoee
72 and western Orange County on November 2, 1920, and required the
73 installation of a historical marker in a public space describing
74 the events of that day, and

75 WHEREAS, the Florida Legislature recognizes an obligation
76 to acknowledge the injuries, damages, infringement of civil
77 rights, and loss of life that African-American residents
78 sustained as a result of the violence and destruction that
79 occurred in Ocoee in November 1920, NOW, THEREFORE,

80
81 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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83 Section 1. The Commissioner of Education's African American
84 History Task Force is directed to examine ways in which the
85 history of the 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots may be included in



576-03903-20

86 instruction on African-American history required pursuant to s.
87 1003.42(2)(h), Florida Statutes. The task force shall submit its
88 recommendations to the Commissioner of Education and the State
89 Board of Education by March 1, 2021.

90 Section 2. The Secretary of State is directed to:

91 (1) In coordination with the Division of Cultural Affairs
92 of the Department of State, determine ways in which the Museum
93 of Florida History and other state museums may promote the
94 history of the 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots through exhibits
95 and educational programs.

96 (2) Collaborate with the National Museum of African
97 American History and Culture of the Smithsonian Institution to
98 seek inclusion of the history of the 1920 Ocoee Election Day
99 Riots in the museum's exhibits.

100 Section 3. The Secretary of Environmental Protection is
101 directed to assess if any state park, or a portion of or a
102 facility therein, may be named in recognition of any victim of
103 the 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots. The secretary may appoint a
104 committee to assess naming opportunities. If a change to state
105 law is required in order to change the designation of a state
106 park, or a portion of or a facility therein, the secretary shall
107 submit any such recommendation to the President of the Senate
108 and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

109 Section 4. District school boards are encouraged to assess
110 naming opportunities for school facilities in recognition of
111 victims of the 1920 Ocoee Election Day Riots.

112 Section 5. This act shall take effect July 1, 2020.