



HR0024

LRB102 03849 MST 13863 r

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2           WHEREAS, It is in the interest of the House of  
3 Representatives to make sure the dark chapters of the history  
4 of the United States are not forgotten, so we do not repeat  
5 them; one such chapter is the eugenics movement in the United  
6 States; and

7           WHEREAS, The term eugenics was first coined by Francis  
8 Galton in the late 1800s and comes from the Greek roots for  
9 "good" and "origin" or "good birth"; eugenics involves  
10 applying principles of genetics and heredity for the purpose  
11 of improving the human race; eugenics claimed the scientific  
12 ability to classify individuals and groups as "fit" or  
13 "unfit"; the "unfit" were defined by race, mental and physical  
14 disabilities, country of origin, and poverty; and

15           WHEREAS, The eugenics movement took root in the United  
16 States in the early 1900s and was led by Charles Davenport, a  
17 prominent biologist, and Harry Laughlin, a former teacher and  
18 principal interested in breeding; in 1910, Davenport founded  
19 the Eugenics Record Office (ERO) at Cold Spring Harbor  
20 Laboratory on Long Island "to improve the natural, physical,  
21 mental, and temperamental qualities of the human family";  
22 eugenics was widely accepted by academics, politicians,  
23 intellectuals, government, the U.S. Supreme Court and

1 progressives; and

2 WHEREAS, While the English eugenics movement focused on  
3 selective breeding for positive traits, the eugenics movement  
4 in the U.S. focused on eliminating negative traits; these  
5 "undesirable" traits, such as poverty, mental disability,  
6 dwarfism, promiscuity, criminality, and others, were most  
7 often concentrated in poor, uneducated, and minority  
8 populations; and

9 WHEREAS, Along with being a scientific movement, eugenics  
10 also became a popular social movement that peaked in the 1920s  
11 and 30s; during this period, the American Eugenics Society was  
12 founded, in addition to many local societies and groups around  
13 the country; many movies and books promoting eugenic  
14 principles became popular; and

15 WHEREAS, Supporters of eugenics helped drive legislation  
16 for the forced sterilization of people deemed to have  
17 undesirable traits; the first state to enact a sterilization  
18 law was Indiana in 1907, quickly followed by California and 28  
19 other states by 1931; these laws resulted in the forced  
20 sterilization of over 64,000 people in the United States; the  
21 eugenics movement even received support from the Supreme Court  
22 in 1927 when the Court ruled that the State of Virginia had the  
23 legal right to forcibly sterilize Carrie Buck for promiscuity

1 (Buck vs Bell); and

2 WHEREAS, California's eugenics program was so robust that  
3 the Nazis turned to the state for advice on perfecting their  
4 own efforts; Hitler proudly admitted to following the laws of  
5 several American states that allowed for the prevention of  
6 reproduction of the "unfit"; the Nazis defense at the  
7 Nuremberg trials even cited Buck vs Bell as justification for  
8 Germany's sterilization program; and

9 WHEREAS, While Illinois did not pass any eugenics-related  
10 sterilization laws, the General Assembly did pass a law in  
11 1915 which allowed for the indefinite institutionalization of  
12 any person deemed "feebleminded" by an expert; and

13 WHEREAS, The U.S. eugenics movement finally began to lose  
14 power in the 1940s and was completely discredited following  
15 the horrors of Nazi Germany; and

16 WHEREAS, While atrocities such as slavery and the  
17 treatment of Native Americas are well known, the U.S. eugenics  
18 movement is not as recognized and hardly appears in many high  
19 school U.S. history textbooks; this is despite the widespread  
20 impact of the eugenics movement, especially on national policy  
21 making and on our educational system, including the framework  
22 of school curriculum and standardized testing; and

1           WHEREAS, With the current political focus on  
2 discrimination and racism, the inclusion of information about  
3 the U.S. eugenics movement in the high school American history  
4 curriculum would help increase awareness about this horrific  
5 part of American history, would help prevent future  
6 generations from repeating the mistakes of the past, and would  
7 help in rectifying the impact of those mistakes; therefore, be  
8 it

9           RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE  
10 HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that  
11 we urge the history of the eugenics movement in the United  
12 States be included in U.S. history classes; and be it further

13           RESOLVED, That we encourage the people of Illinois to  
14 educate themselves on the history of eugenics in the United  
15 States; and be it further

16           RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be  
17 delivered to the State Board of Education to be disseminated  
18 to all schools in Illinois, the Illinois Library Association  
19 to be disseminated to all libraries in the State, the Library  
20 of Congress, the National Archives and Records Administration,  
21 the National Museum of African American History and Culture,  
22 the DuSable Museum of African American History, the Governor

1 of Illinois, the Mayor of Chicago, and all members of the  
2 General Assembly.