



H.Res. 721 - Recognizing the 60th anniversary of the Mendez v. Westminster decision which ended segregation of Mexican and Mexican American students in California schools, and for other purposes

FLOOR SITUATION

H.Res. 721 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Charles Gonzales (D-TX) on October 9, 2007. The bill was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary but was not considered.

H.Res. 721 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House of Representatives on October 22, 2007.

SUMMARY

H.Res. 721:

- Recognizes the 60th anniversary of the Mendez v. Westminster decision which ended segregation of Mexican and Mexican American students in California schools;
- Honors the Mendez family and congratulates Sylvia Mendez for her continued efforts to keep alive the importance of this case and the impact it had on her future; and
- Encourages the continued fight against school segregation and the education of the people of the United States of the civil right implications of the Mendez v. Westminster case.

BACKGROUND

In 1947, the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit decided the Mendez v. Westminster case in an en banc decision that held that the segregation of Mexican and Mexican American students into separate 'Mexican schools' in the United States was unconstitutional.

On March 2, 1945, a group of Mexican-American fathers led by Gonzalo Mendez on behalf of his daughter Sylvia, challenged the practice of school segregation in the U.S. District Court in Los Angeles. The fathers claimed that their children, along with 5,000 other children of 'Mexican and Latin descent', were victims of unconstitutional discrimination by being forced to attend separate 'Mexican' schools in the Westminster,

Garden Grove, Santa Ana, and El Modena school districts of Orange County. Judge Paul J. McCormick ruled in favor of Mendez and his co-plaintiffs on February 18, 1946. The Westminster school district appealed the decision of the district court, and on April 14, 1947, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeal affirmed the district court's ruling.

Later in 1947, California Governor and future Chief Justice of the United States Earl Warren signed into law a repeal of the last remaining school segregation statutes in the California Education Code and thus ended `separate but equal' in California schools and with it school segregation. Seven years later in *Brown v. Board of Education* the Supreme Court held that `separate but equal' schools were unconstitutional, ending school segregation throughout the United States.

COST

A cost estimate from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) was not available at the time of publication.

STAFF CONTACT

For questions or further information contact Matt Lakin at (202) 226-2302.