

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

1st Session of the 58th Legislature (2021)

SENATE
RESOLUTION 24

By: Treat

AS INTRODUCED

A Resolution recognizing the centennial of the 1921
Tulsa Race Massacre; applauding the Commission;
encouraging Oklahomans; and directing distribution.

WHEREAS, early in the 20th Century, an African American
entrepreneurial center, known as the Greenwood District, was born in
downtown Tulsa. Segregation forced African Americans to shop and do
business within the 35-square-block area. The dynamic nationally
renowned business hub became known as "Black Wall Street"; and

WHEREAS, Greenwood became one of the most prominent
concentrations of African American businesses in the nation. The
district showcased the strength, courage and entrepreneurial spirits
of several Tulsans including Simon Berry, Dr. A.C. Jackson, John and
Loula Williams, Mabel B. Little and E.W. Woods, among many others.
Together these individuals overcame Tulsa's oppressive Jim Crow laws
to open numerous businesses including, among many others, a charter

1 plane service, bus line, hotel, clinic, theatre, confectionary,
2 garage and beauty salon; and

3 WHEREAS, Greenwood Avenue, the epicenter of the District, was
4 compared to other famous and celebrated corridors such as Memphis'
5 Beale Street and Chicago's State Street; and

6 WHEREAS, tensions were high following the ever-growing success
7 and notoriety of Black Wall Street. On May 30, 1921, unprecedented
8 civil unrest was triggered following the alleged assault of a white
9 young woman, Sarah Page, by an African American young man, Dick
10 Rowland. A mob of white men and African American men gathered at
11 the courthouse and during the ensuing fight, a gun went off; and

12 WHEREAS, thousands of armed white men, some deputized by local
13 law enforcement, descended on the Greenwood District the next day
14 and less than 24 hours later, burned to the ground Black Wall
15 Street, and killed an estimated 300 people. In total, more than
16 1,400 homes and businesses were burned leaving nearly 10,000 people
17 homeless and millions of dollars in damages; and

18 WHEREAS, the tragic event, originally known as the Tulsa Race
19 Riot of 1921, was barely mentioned in history books until 1997 when
20 the Tulsa Race Riot Commission was formed by the state to research
21 and formally document the event; and

22 WHEREAS, in 2017, the Tulsa Race Riot Centennial Commission was
23 formed and helped changed public perspective of the historic event,
24 recognizing it as the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. The commission has

1 also successfully introduced curriculum to teach Oklahoma students
2 about the historic event and worked with Rogers State University to
3 film videos to better educate the public. In 2020, the Commission
4 broke ground for the new history center, Greenwood Rising, which
5 will honor the legacy of Black Wall Street before and after the 1921
6 Tulsa Race Massacre; and

7 WHEREAS, today, the Greenwood District is striving to once again
8 be a flourishing hub for business, education, recreation, culture
9 and entertainment.

10 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE 1ST SESSION
11 OF THE 58TH OKLAHOMA LEGISLATURE:

12 THAT the Oklahoma Senate, with heavy hearts but hope for a
13 brighter future, commemorates the centennial of the 1921 Tulsa Race
14 Massacre, and extends sympathies to the families of those lost and
15 impacted during the tragic event.

16 THAT the Oklahoma Senate applauds the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre
17 Centennial Commission for serving as a model for the city, state and
18 nation by demonstrating unity across racial, religious and political
19 boundaries and proving that differences create opportunities to
20 learn, build and work with one another.

21 THAT the Oklahoma Senate encourages Oklahomans to visit the
22 Greenwood District to learn about its rich history and the people
23 who contributed to its greatness, as well as to spread the
24 District's message of love and hope.

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THAT a copy of this resolution be distributed to the 1921 Tulsa
Race Massacre Centennial Commission.

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