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June 19, 2009 12:05PM

SENATE APPROVES MEASURE APOLOGIZING FOR SLAVERY AND RACIAL SEGREGATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ) today announced Senate approval of a resolution apologizing for the enslavement and racial segregation of African-Americans. The New Jersey Senator is an original cosponsor of the measure.

“This resolution condemns the injustice of slavery and Jim Crow and helps us learn critical lessons from this disturbing period in our history. This apology serves as inspiration for all of us in our continued fight to heal the wounds of the past and protect the rights and freedoms we cherish so much in the future,” said Sen. Lautenberg.

The measure, which yesterday passed the Senate unanimously:

- Acknowledges the fundamental injustice, cruelty, brutality, and inhumanity of slavery and Jim Crow laws;
- Apologizes to African-Americans on behalf of the people of the United States, for the wrongs committed against them and their ancestors who suffered under slavery and Jim Crow laws; and
- Expresses the Senate’s recommitment to the principle that all people are created equal and endowed with inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and calls on all people of the United States to work toward eliminating racial prejudices, injustices and discrimination from our society.

Seven states, including New Jersey, have apologized for their past role in slavery and Jim Crow. Last year, the House of Representatives apologized for slavery and racial segregation. This measure was crafted to address a glaring oversight that the Senate has not, on behalf of the nation, acknowledged or apologized for slavery or Jim Crow.

In 1988, Congress apologized for the internment of Japanese Americans held during World War II. In 1993, Congress apologized to native Hawaiians for overthrowing their king. In 2005, the Senate apologized for its failure to enact anti-lynching legislation. Last year, the Senate adopted as part of the Indian Health Bill an amendment apologizing to Native Americans for their past treatment.

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