**South Carolina General Assembly**

125th Session, 2023-2024

**H. 4460**

**STATUS INFORMATION**

Concurrent Resolution

Sponsors: Reps. Wheeler, Mitchell, Connell, Yow, Alexander, Anderson, Atkinson, Bailey, Ballentine, Bamberg, Bannister, Bauer, Beach, Bernstein, Blackwell, Bradley, Brewer, Brittain, Burns, Bustos, Calhoon, Carter, Caskey, Chapman, Chumley, Clyburn, Cobb-Hunter, Collins, B.J. Cox, B.L. Cox, Crawford, Cromer, Davis, Dillard, Elliott, Erickson, Felder, Forrest, Gagnon, Garvin, Gatch, Gibson, Gilliam, Gilliard, Guest, Guffey, Haddon, Hager, Hardee, Harris, Hart, Hartnett, Hayes, Henderson-Myers, Henegan, Herbkersman, Hewitt, Hiott, Hixon, Hosey, Howard, Hyde, Jefferson, J.E. Johnson, J.L. Johnson, S. Jones, W. Jones, Jordan, Kilmartin, King, Kirby, Landing, Lawson, Leber, Ligon, Long, Lowe, Magnuson, May, McCabe, McCravy, McDaniel, McGinnis, J. Moore, T. Moore, A.M. Morgan, T.A. Morgan, Moss, Murphy, Neese, B. Newton, W. Newton, Nutt, O'Neal, Oremus, Ott, Pace, Pedalino, Pendarvis, Pope, Rivers, Robbins, Rose, Rutherford, Sandifer, Schuessler, Sessions, G.M. Smith, M.M. Smith, Stavrinakis, Taylor, Tedder, Thayer, Thigpen, Trantham, Vaughan, Weeks, West, Wetmore, White, Whitmire, Williams, Willis and Wooten

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Introduced in the House on May 9, 2023

Introduced in the Senate on May 9, 2023

Adopted by the General Assembly on May 9, 2023

Summary: Cleveland School fire, 100th anniversary

**HISTORY OF LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS**

Date Body Action Description with journal page number

5/9/2023 House Introduced, adopted, sent to Senate ([House Journal‑page 14](h:\hj\20230509.docx))

5/9/2023 Senate Introduced, adopted, returned with concurrence ([Senate Journal‑page 14](h:\sj\20230509.docx))

View the latest  [legislative information](https://www.scstatehouse.gov/billsearch.php?billnumbers=4460&session=125&summary=B)  at the website

**VERSIONS OF THIS BILL**

[05/09/2023](https://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess125_2023-2024/prever/4460_20230509.docx)

A concurrent RESOLUTION

TO COMMEMORATE THE ONE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CLEVELAND SCHOOL FIRE OF 1923 AND TO REMEMBER THE SEVENTY-SEVEN PEOPLE, INCLUDING FORTY-ONE CHILDREN, WHO PERISHED IN THIS TRAGIC EVENT.

Whereas, the Cleveland School fire was the fourth deadliest school fire or explosion in American history and the deadliest fire in South Carolina history. It occurred near Camden on May 17, 1923, during a school play, killing seventy-seven people; and

Whereas, the two-story school was located six miles southeast of Camden and served students at all grade levels. The school was constructed primarily out of wood and was lighted only with oil lamps. Two classrooms were located on the first floor, while an auditorium was located on the second floor. A single wooden stairway provided the only access to the second floor; and

Whereas, the school was scheduled to close at the end of the 1922-1923 school year. On May 17, 1923, the day the school was to close permanently, around three hundred people were attending a play in the school’s auditorium. This play, which took place after the annual graduation ceremony, was a short comedy called either *Miss Topsy Turvy* or *Topsy Turvy*. During the play’s last act, an oil lamp fell from the wall, causing its contents to spill all over the stage and ignite. A group of men attempted to smother the flames with their coats but were unsuccessful; and

Whereas, the fire eventually traveled up the stage curtains and then spread rapidly across the ceiling, causing a panic. Spectators rushed toward the stairway to escape. However, many people were trampled to death at the door to the stairs because the door was so narrow; and

Whereas, others died of smoke inhalation before the flames could reach them. The spectators’ excess weight also caused the stairway to collapse, trapping those inside on the second floor of the building. Many of these people survived by jumping out of the school’s windows. The school was completely destroyed within an hour; and

Whereas, seventy-seven people perished in the fire, including forty-one children and the father of future South Carolina Governor John C. West. Only about one quarter of the victims could be identified. Those who were not claimed by family members were buried in a mass grave at the Beulah Methodist Church Cemetery; and

Whereas, on the occasion of the Cleveland School fire’s centennial anniversary, the South Carolina General Assembly expresses its deepest sympathy to the descendants of those who lost their lives in the fiery holocaust of May 17, 1923. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives, the Senate concurring:

That the members of the South Carolina General Assembly, by this resolution, commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of the Cleveland School fire of 1923 and remember the seventy-seven people, including forty-one children, who perished in this tragic event.

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