

SENATE RESOLUTION No. 45

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

INTRODUCED MAY 16, 1996

By Senator CARDINALE

1   **A SENATE RESOLUTION** condemning the recent burnings of churches in the  
2       South and calling for Congressional hearings.  
3  
4   **WHEREAS**, Since January of 1995, more than 20 church fires, in seven  
5       southern states, have been under active investigation by federal officials;  
6       and  
7   **WHEREAS**, Many of these churches are small, with predominantly African-  
8       American congregations, often located in poor, rural areas; and  
9   **WHEREAS**, These churches are irreplaceable buildings, some more than a  
10      century old, thought of as shared heirlooms, built by hand; and  
11   **WHEREAS**, The burnings of these churches, which represent hope, dreams,  
12      and beliefs, are particularly heinous because the fires summon nightmares  
13      of past terrorism against persons of African-American descent; and  
14   **WHEREAS**, The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, the Federal  
15      Bureau of Investigation and local law enforcement, as well as the Justice  
16      Department's civil rights division, are searching for evidence to determine  
17      whether these acts of arson are a conspiracy of hate or random acts of  
18      malice; and  
19   **WHEREAS**, There has been a wave of vandalism, burning and firebombing,  
20      reminiscent of the abominable attacks during the height of the anti-  
21      integration era more than 30 years ago, resulting in more than 40 cases of  
22      arson or vandalism at churches since 1990 under investigation; and  
23   **WHEREAS**, Federal and local investigators report that they lack evidence of  
24      any centralized or organized campaign of racial terrorism; and  
25   **WHEREAS**, The failure of the federal government to make headway in  
26      determining the cause of these acts of arson is outrageous and  
27      unacceptable; and  
28   **WHEREAS**, The members of the congregations of these churches, perhaps  
29      targets of religious or racial hatred, should not become victims of a national  
30      passivity possibly attributable to a preference by many Americans not to  
31      believe that religious or racial bigotry exists; now, therefore,  
32    **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the Senate of the State of New Jersey:*  
33  
34        1. This House condemns the action of those individuals responsible for the  
35      atrocious burnings of the more than 20 churches in our southern states.

1

2       2. This House calls upon the United States Congress to hold hearings to  
3 review the federal government's investigations into these acts of arson to  
4 determine whether they are being conducted with appropriate vigor and  
5 diligence.

6

7       3. A duly authenticated copy of this resolution, signed by the President of  
8 the Senate and attested by the Secretary thereof, shall be transmitted to the  
9 President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the House of  
10 Representatives, and every member of Congress elected from this State.

11

12

13

# STATEMENT

14

15       This resolution condemns the action of those individuals responsible for the  
16 recent burnings of the more than 20 churches with predominantly African-  
17 American congregations in our southern states and calls upon the United  
18 States Congress to hold hearings to review the federal government's  
19 investigations into these acts of arson to determine whether they are being  
20 conducted with appropriate vigor and diligence.

21

22

23

24

25       Condemns recent church burnings; calls for Congressional hearings.