

## **News from U.S. Rep. John Spratt (D-SC)**

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US House of Representatives – Washington, DC

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### **Spratt Statement on Jefferson High School Reunion**

*WASHINGTON – U.S. Rep. John Spratt (D-SC) submitted the following statement on Jefferson High School's reunion to his colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives. The statement was printed in the Congressional Record on October 11.*

"Mr. Speaker, on the weekend before Labor Day, some four hundred alumni of Jefferson High School gathered for their first reunion since Jefferson closed more than thirty years ago.

"Jefferson got its start in a frame schoolhouse built for African-American students next to Wesley United Methodist Church on West Jefferson Street in York, South Carolina. From there, Jefferson graduated to a Rosenwald school and became the African-American public school in a racially segregated system. Although the system was called "separate but equal," Jefferson never had facilities or teaching materials equal to its counterparts, the white schools that I attended. Used books were passed on from white students, dated and worn. The school district built a new high school for white students in 1950, but left black students to make the best of their old one. The students, teachers and administrators at Jefferson did just that. They made the most of their circumstances. The students who came back for this reunion did not dwell on what they lacked at Jefferson High School. They saluted teachers who took a personal interest, believed in them, and encouraged them to excel. They recalled their formidable teams in football and basketball and the musical talent they produced. They recognized the values instilled in them for a lifetime.

"When the alumni sat down for a banquet the last night of their reunion, the pride they felt at being "Jeffersonians" was easily felt and well-founded. Among the four hundred attending the dinner, there were graduates who had risen to the highest levels of the Civil Service and become department heads in state government; Ph.D.'s in the sciences and liberal arts; college professors; school teachers; successful entrepreneurs; attorneys; and many more who had distinguished themselves. The banquet speaker, Roberta Wright, symbolized their success. She finished Jefferson and went on to become a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Fisk University and the University of Michigan School of Law. She made a stirring speech, challenging everyone to do more for the common good.

"With the onset of integration in the early 1970s, Jefferson High School came to an end. But the three-day Reunion made clear that Jefferson lives on in the lives it made better. Hundreds of the alumni attending attested to better, more productive lives because of what they learned at Jefferson under teachers who cared, encouraged, and challenged."

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