

Senator Tim Kaine  
231 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Ben Cline  
2443 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Mark Warner  
703 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Morgan Griffith  
2202 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Renaming the Richard H. Poff Federal Building

Dear Senators and Congressmen:

I am writing to express my support for renaming the Richard H. Poff Federal Building in Roanoke to honor one of Southwest Virginia's undeservedly forgotten legal titans: civil rights attorney Reuben E. Lawson.

Mr. Lawson was an African American attorney who represented the Roanoke chapter of the NAACP and played a pivotal role in the civil rights movement in Roanoke and surrounding localities. He filed the first desegregation suit in Southwest Virginia, *Walker v. Floyd County School Board*, Civil Action No. 1012 (W.D. Va. 1960), delivering the suit to the Court by hand and marching the young African American plaintiffs into the federal courthouse. This case resulted in Judge Roby C. Thompson ordering that Floyd County admit 13 African American students into its high schools, which before then enrolled white students exclusively, despite *Brown v. Board of Education* holding that segregation is unconstitutional. Similar efforts and results soon followed in Pulaski County, Grayson County, Roanoke County, Roanoke City, and Lynchburg.

On the other hand, the Federal Building's current namesake, Richard H. Poff, publicly opposed integration, signing the Declaration of Constitutional Principles, known informally as the Southern Manifesto, which repudiated *Brown v. Board of Education*, and repeatedly voted against the Civil Rights Acts and the Voting Rights Act. We do not feel that Mr. Poff best represents the spirit of Roanoke and its diverse population.

It is my understanding that Attorney John P. Fishwick, Jr., has proposed legislation to rename the Federal Building after Reuben E. Lawson. I wholeheartedly support this legislation and ask you, as my elected representatives, to do the same. Thank you.

Signed,

Date  
Residential Address