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Chief Justice Seitz attends bill signing at White House recognizing two Delaware sites as *Brown v Board* national historic landmarks

The former Hockessin School #107C and the former Claymont High School both featured in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* case that desegregated Delaware public schools

Delaware Supreme Court Chief Justice Collins J. Seitz, Jr. was among dignitaries and invited guests at a White House Oval Office signing ceremony last week that extended historic status to two sites in Delaware that played a central part in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* case. The two sites are the former Hockessin School #107C and the former Claymont High School (now the Claymont Community Center.)

The signing ceremony for bill S.270 took place on May 12, 2022 in the Oval Office with President Joseph R. Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris and Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland. It also included Delaware's congressional delegation – Senators Tom Carper and Chris Coons and Rep. Lisa Blunt-Rochester – and a number of students who attended the former Hockessin School #107C.

The *Brown v. Board of Education* National Historical Park Expansion and Redesignation Act ([S. 270](#)) designates a number of sites across the nation that are significant to the *Brown* decision including the two Delaware locations along with sites in Summerton, South Carolina; Topeka, Kansas; Farmville, Va. and Washington, D.C.

The Chief Justice's father, Collins J. Seitz, Sr. – then a Vice Chancellor on the Court of Chancery – ruled in 1952 in two cases brought by Attorney Louis Redding that black students were receiving an inferior education under segregation and ordered the immediate admission of black students to the all-white schools. Those two Delaware cases, *Belton v Gebhart* and *Bulah v Gebhart*, were combined with cases from other states from across the nation in an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court that became known as *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. Delaware's case was the only one where a judge ruled in favor of the plaintiffs and the high court ultimately sided with the ruling of Vice Chancellor Seitz in ending public school segregation.

Chief Justice Seitz now sits on a board overseeing the preservation and renovation of the historic former School #107C in Hockessin. The renovated school is set to become a Center for Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Equity. The historic designation comes as the Chief Justice and others, including many who attended the signing ceremony, marked the 67th anniversary of the ruling on *Brown v. Board of Education* Day this week at the former school in Hockessin.

The Department of the Interior may now acquire land related to the sites by donation, exchange, or purchase and develop a management plan for the historical park in those areas, according to the act.

The measure follows a multi-year advocacy campaign led by the National Trust in collaboration with local groups. It passed the Senate and House last month before the signing ceremony with President Biden last week.