

**Second Regular Session
Seventy-fourth General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO**

INTRODUCED

LLS NO. R24-0995.01 Olivia Nesselroade x2670

HR24-1003

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

Bacon and English,

House Committees

HOUSE RESOLUTION 24-1003

101 **CONCERNING RECOGNIZING FEBRUARY OF 2024 AS BLACK HISTORY**
102 **MONTH.**

1 WHEREAS, Every February, the United States acknowledges and
2 honors that Black Americans, through their contributions and sacrifices,
3 have played an indelible role in shaping this country; and

4 WHEREAS, Even though race, and thus the designations of
5 "negro", "Black", and "colored", has been recognized as a construct
6 originally built to separate and disenfranchise people based on skin color
7 that was associated with people originating from the African continent,
8 there is a shared culture derived from that history that should be seen and
9 elevated; and

10 WHEREAS, Black History Month celebrates the rich cultural
11 heritage, impact, and triumphs of, and acknowledges the adversities faced
12 as a part of, the African diaspora in the United States; and

13 WHEREAS, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, known as the "father of
14 Black history", first set out in 1915 to designate a time to promote and
15 educate people about Black history and culture; and

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.
Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing law.
Dashes through the words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law.

1 WHEREAS, Dr. Woodson believed that the history created by
2 Black people, despite attempts to limit their potential, is a critical part of
3 American history, and he founded the organization now known as the
4 Association for the Study of African American Life and History, or
5 ASALH, galvanizing fellow historians to envision a weeklong celebration
6 to encourage the coordinated teaching of Black history in public schools;
7 and

8 WHEREAS, In 1926, Dr. Woodson was successful in creating
9 Negro History Week, a week celebrated during the second week of
10 February, as it coincided with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and
11 Frederick Douglass, both of whom ensured emancipation; and

12 WHEREAS, Because Black history was not woven into the fabric
13 of the American history taught year-round, Dr. Woodson believed that
14 Negro History Week would not place limitations on but would focus and
15 broaden the nation's consciousness of the importance of learning Black
16 history and make the celebration of Black history in the academic field of
17 history a serious area of study; and

18 WHEREAS, By the late 1960s, due to demonstrations concerning
19 racial injustice, inequality, and poverty during the Civil Rights
20 Movement, Negro History Week evolved into what is now known as
21 Black History Month; and

22 WHEREAS, Calling upon Americans to "seize the opportunity to
23 honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in
24 every area of endeavor throughout our history", in 1976, President Gerald
25 R. Ford officially recognized Black History Month during the nation's
26 bicentennial; and

27 WHEREAS, The Association for the Study of African American
28 Life and History celebrates its 109th anniversary this year and designates
29 a theme for Black History Month every year; and

30 WHEREAS, Black History Month is rooted in the West African
31 principle of Sankofa, which is symbolized by a bird whose feet are
32 planted forward with its neck reaching backwards to protect an egg on its
33 back; Sankofa evokes an image of remembering the past to make positive
34 progress in the future; and

1 WHEREAS, Black Americans have focused on examining three
2 particular eras of Black history to pursue enlightenment and true equality:
3 Looking to history and beliefs in values to be freed first from bondage;
4 then to be freed from overtly oppressive laws and policies designed to
5 separate and disenfranchise; and now, presently, to mitigate the impact of
6 such laws through examining and dismantling lingering systems; and

7 WHEREAS, Many escaped and former slaves found their way to
8 Colorado in pursuit of freedom to read, build families, and develop
9 opportunities, and here in Colorado, Nat Love and James Beckwourth
10 cultivated their skills in mountaineering, fur trapping, and driving cattle;
11 often called "mountain men", or the pejorative to white cow hands,
12 "cowboys", they contributed to settling the West; and

13 WHEREAS, Barney Ford and Clara Brown built hotels, shelters,
14 restaurants, and other businesses to support burgeoning mining trades in
15 Colorado; their wealth helped them become influential in shaping the way
16 Colorado would be ratified as a state in the Union; and

17 WHEREAS, Dr. Justina Ford, who was the first licensed Black
18 American female doctor in Denver, Colorado, delivered over 7,000
19 babies, serving a diverse clientele of poor people, Black Americans, and
20 non-English-speaking immigrants who had been turned away from
21 hospitals; and

22 WHEREAS, Oliver Toussaint Jackson, as an early homesteader
23 who was inspired by self-sufficiency and the promises of the federal
24 "Homestead Act", was the founder of Dearfield, Colorado, the largest
25 Black homesteading settlement in Colorado; and

26 WHEREAS, Denver, Colorado, was known as a place to develop
27 Black talent; the city would not only shape the depiction and artistry of
28 Black people in America, but also propel the arts in America: From
29 Colorado's Denver East High School came artists such as Hattie
30 McDaniel, the first Black Oscar winner, who played Mammy in "Gone
31 with the Wind"; Don Cheadle; Pam Grier; and the founding members of
32 the band Earth, Wind & Fire; and

33 WHEREAS, Denver's Five Points neighborhood became known
34 as the "Harlem of the West" and a performance hub for America west of
35 the Mississippi, featuring dancers like Cleo Parker Robinson, a Kennedy
36 Center Medal of Honor recipient; and

1 WHEREAS, Representatives John T. Gunnell and Joseph H.
2 Stuart, Colorado's first and second Black representatives, served
3 Arapahoe County from 1881 to 1883 and 1895 to 1897, respectively; and

4 WHEREAS, In the General Assembly, Representative Gunnell
5 chaired the committee on federal relations; was a member of the
6 committee on elections and apportionment, as well as a member of the
7 penitentiary committee; and sponsored House Bill 57, which concerned
8 tenants-at-will, or monthly renters, and was introduced on January 15,
9 1881; and

10 WHEREAS, Representative Stuart worked on a bill to ensure
11 equal access to public places, regardless of a person's race; and

12 WHEREAS, Henry O. Wagoner, brother-in-law to Barney Ford
13 and mentor to the sons of Frederick Douglass, was appointed a clerk in
14 the first Colorado state legislature, and in 1880, he was appointed deputy
15 sheriff of Arapahoe County; and

16 WHEREAS, Black veterans returning from World War II were
17 stationed in or relocated to Colorado and would later fight to ensure that
18 the values of freedom they fought for overseas would be upheld for Black
19 people in the United States; and

20 WHEREAS, James Reynolds, a member of the Tuskegee Airmen,
21 led the Denver branch of the Congress of Racial Equality, or CORE, as
22 the group organized protests from sit-ins to freedom rides across the
23 country; one of the West's first successful protest demonstrations was the
24 1943 picketing of a Denver movie theater that segregated its black and
25 white patrons; and

26 WHEREAS, Future civic leaders like Wilma and Wellington
27 Webb and Anna Jo Haynes would also become members of CORE who
28 would fight to end policies rooted in racism, such as redlining; and

29 WHEREAS, The journey is never long when freedom is the
30 destination, and to this end, Black Coloradans fought and continue to
31 pioneer equality for all; now, therefore,

32 *Be It Resolved by the House of Representatives of the*
33 *Seventy-fourth General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

1 (1) That the Colorado House of Representatives recognizes the
2 contributions Black Americans have made to the development of
3 Colorado and the United States; and

4 (2) That the Colorado House of Representatives recognizes
5 February of 2024 as Black History Month and the Association for the
6 Study of African American Life and History's 2024 theme of "African
7 Americans and the Arts".

8 *Be It Further Resolved*, That copies of this Resolution be sent to
9 History Colorado, Wilma and Wellington Webb, Anna Jo Haynes, and
10 Cleo Parker Robinson.