



SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 26-007

BY SENATOR(S) Coleman and Exum, Amabile, Baisley, Ball, Bright, Carson, Catlin, Cutter, Danielson, Frizell, Gonzales J., Hinrichsen, Jodeh, Kipp, Kirkmeyer, Kolker, Lindstedt, Liston, Marchman, Michaelson Jenet, Mullica, Pelton B., Pelton R., Rich, Roberts, Rodriguez, Simpson, Snyder, Sullivan, Wallace, Weissman, Zamora Wilson;

also REPRESENTATIVE(S) English and Ricks, Bacon, Barron, Boesenecker, Brown, Caldwell, Camacho, Carter, Clifford, Duran, Espenosa, Froelich, Garcia, Gilchrist, Goldstein, Gonzalez R., Hamrick, Hartsook, Jackson, Johnson, Joseph, Lindsay, Lukens, Mabrey, Marshall, Martinez, Mauro, McCormick, Nguyen, Paschal, Phillips, Rutinel, Rydin, Sirota, Slaugh, Smith, Soper, Stewart K., Stewart R., Story, Taggart, Titone, Velasco, Weinberg, Willford, Winter T., Woodrow, Woog, Zokaie, McCluskie.

CONCERNING RECOGNIZING FEBRUARY OF 2026 AS BLACK HISTORY MONTH.

WHEREAS, Every February, the United States acknowledges and honors that Americans of African descent, through their contributions and sacrifices, have played an indelible role in shaping this country; and

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

WHEREAS, In 1915, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, known as the "father of Black history", first set out to designate a time to promote and educate people about Black history and culture, as he believed that history created by Black people, despite attempts to limit their potential, is a critical part of American history; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Woodson founded the organization now known as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, or ASALH, galvanizing fellow historians to envision a weeklong celebration to encourage the coordinated teaching of Black history in public schools because it was not woven into the fabric of the American history taught year-round; and

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

WHEREAS, Dr. Woodson believed that Negro History Week would not place limitations on but would focus and broaden the nation's consciousness of the importance of learning Black history and make the celebration of Black history in the academic field of history a serious area of study; and

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

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

WHEREAS, The Association for the Study of African American Life and History celebrates its 111th anniversary this year and 100th anniversary of Negro History Week and consequently Black History Month; the 2026 Black History Month theme is designated as "A Century of Black History Commemorations"; and

WHEREAS, As part of the global African diaspora, people of African descent in the United States have viewed their role in history as critical to their own development and that of the world. Along with writing Black histories, Black scholars started observing the milestones in the struggle

of people of African descent to gain their freedom and equality. Revealing their connection to the diaspora, they commemorated the Haitian Revolution, the end of the slave trade, and the end of slavery in Jamaica. They observed American emancipation with Watch Night, Jubilee Day, and Juneteenth celebrations, and noted the motivation of Black people to dig up their own history and present it to the world: "The American Negro must remake his past in order to make his future"; and

WHEREAS, In recognition of the contributions of notable Coloradans of African descent who have shaped our state. Barney Ford escaped slavery in Virginia and became a prominent restaurateur, barber, and entrepreneur after arriving in Colorado in 1860. As a civil rights advocate, he actively opposed statehood with suffrage denied to Black men and some poor whites. The Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (ratified in 1870) prohibited denying the vote based on race, paving the way for renewed statehood efforts. President Ulysses S. Grant signed Colorado into the Union on August 1, 1876, as the Centennial State. Mr. Ford's actions were influential in guiding Colorado into entry into our Union of States with a constitution that put "All Men" on equal footing before the law, effectively helping guide it toward statehood aligned with Reconstruction-era principles of equality. He continued his civic work afterward, becoming the first Black man nominated to the Colorado Territorial legislature, serving on a federal grand jury, and advocating for education and anti-discrimination measures, earning his place in history and as a beacon of light above this chamber; and

WHEREAS, Clara Brown, also born into slavery in Virginia around 1800 and emancipated in Kentucky upon her enslaver's death in 1856 or 1859, journeyed westward during the Colorado Gold Rush as one of the first African American women to settle in the region, becoming known as "Aunt Clara" for her boundless generosity and humanitarian spirit while building wealth through laundry services, boarding houses, mining investments, and real estate in Central City and later Denver, using her prosperity to provide shelter, aid, and support to newly freed formerly enslaved people, orphans, and settlers in need, earning her the enduring title "Angel of the Rockies" and recognition as Colorado's first Black pioneer woman; and

WHEREAS, Representatives John T. Gunnell and Joseph H. Stuart, Colorado's first and second Black state representatives, served Arapahoe

County from 1881 to 1883 and from 1895 to 1897, respectively; Representative Gunnell sponsored House Bill 57 in 1881, which concerned tenants-at-will, or monthly renters, and Representative Stuart worked on a bill to ensure equal access to public places, regardless of a person's race; and the recognition of their history and leadership lead others to pursue legislative leadership in pursuit of creating a thriving and inclusive state; and

WHEREAS, Knowledge and recognition of Colorado's early Black civic leaders lead the generations to follow to serve as well. Ruben Lewis Sims Jr. was the first African American firefighter for Aurora Fire Rescue, serving from 1977 until 1997. A pioneer for racial minorities in the department, he was a beloved engineer and firefighter. In October 2023, a portion of East 16th Avenue was renamed in his honor. Penfield Tate II was the first black mayor of Boulder; he did not seek reelection because they tried to recall him for supporting LGBTQ+ rights in the 1970s in Boulder; and

WHEREAS, Colorado celebrates Senator Regis Groff, the first Black Colorado Senator; Gloria Tanner, the first Black woman senator; Arie Taylor, the first Black woman representative; Terrance Carroll, the first Black Speaker of the House; Peter Groff, the first Black President of the Senate; Naquetta Ricks, the first African immigrant legislator; Junie Joseph, the first Haitian immigrant legislator; Regina English, the first Black woman legislator elected from El Paso County; and Senator James Coleman, the presiding President of the Senate; and

WHEREAS, The recognition of Black History Month is not only a call to stewardship of history but also a call to service and to develop leadership. Over the past 100 years, the proliferation of organizations like the National Pan-Hellenic Council, otherwise known as the Divine Nine, the Urban League, and more recently, the My African American Miss (Yes M.A.A.M.) scholarship pageant have trained and developed generations of Black people to become community leaders, business leaders, advocates, and so much more; and

WHEREAS, Many people have contributed to the inclusion of Black history, culture, and perspective in our community development. People like Fannie Mae Duncan of Colorado Springs, who is memorialized because her courageous stand fostered the peaceful integration of

Colorado Springs. Ms. Duncan saying "Everybody welcome" served as inspiration for leaders like Candice McKnight, the founder of the African American Historical and Genealogical Society of Colorado Springs, and June Waller, a National Organization of African Americans in Housing legacy award recipient for over 50 years of work in the field. Both espouse the values that knowing and remembering history helps us not repeat history and that we as a society can forge forward; and

WHEREAS, Colorado celebrates Edna Wilson-Mosley, a prominent politician, civil rights activist, and educator in Denver and Aurora, who was the first Black City Councilwoman to serve in Aurora, the only Black founder of the Women's Bank of Denver, where she served on the board of directors, and a civil rights specialist for the Colorado Civil Rights Commission. She was also married to John Mosley, a highly respected and original Tuskegee Airman; and

WHEREAS, Colorado celebrates Marie Greenwood, Denver's first Black public school teacher, who forged a path for educators like Janet Damon, a teacher at DELTA High School in Denver Public Schools, who was awarded Colorado's 2025 Teacher of the Year for creating supportive learning environments, advocating for students off-track for graduation, and promoting literacy through initiatives like Afros and Books; and

WHEREAS, Black Americans have focused on examining three particular eras of Black history to pursue enlightenment and true equality: Looking to history and beliefs in values to be freed first from bondage; then to be freed from overtly oppressive laws and policies designed to separate and disenfranchise; and now, presently, to mitigate the impact of such laws through examining and dismantling lingering systems; and to this end, Black Coloradans continue to advocate for and pioneer equity to achieve equality for all; now, therefore,

Be It Resolved by the Senate of the Seventy-fifth General Assembly of the State of Colorado, the House of Representatives concurring herein:

(1) That the General Assembly recognizes the profound contributions Americans of African descent have made to the development of Colorado and the United States; and

(2) That the General Assembly recognizes February 2026 as the 100th

Black History Month to:

- Celebrate the rich cultural heritage, profound impact, and enduring triumphs of Americans of African descent;
- Honor the essential contributions of Americans of African descent to the cultural tapestry of Colorado and the United States; and
- Affirm that we cannot learn valid lessons from false or partial history, but must engage with the full truth of the past, including both adversities and achievements.

Be It Further Resolved, That copies of this Joint Resolution be sent to the presidents of the local National Pan-Hellenic Councils in Colorado, History Colorado for use in the Racial Equity Study, Governor Jared Polis, the members of Colorado's congressional delegation, President Donald J. Trump, and Vice President J.D. Vance.

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