

**First Regular Session
Seventy-fifth General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO**

INTRODUCED

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HJR25-1009

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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 25-1009

101 **CONCERNING RECOGNIZING FEBRUARY OF 2025 AS BLACK HISTORY**
102 **MONTH.**

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

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

10 WHEREAS, In 1915, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, known as the

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 "father of Black history", first set out to designate a time to promote and
2 educate people about Black history and culture, as he believed that history
3 created by Black people, despite attempts to limit their potential, is a
4 critical part of American history; and

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

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

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

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

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

29 WHEREAS, The Association for the Study of African American
30 Life and History celebrates its 110th anniversary this year and designated
31 the 2025 Black History Month theme as "African Americans and Labor",
32 focusing on the various and profound ways that work and working of all
33 kinds, free and unfree, skilled and unskilled, vocational and voluntary,
34 intersect with the collective experiences of Black people and the
35 American people; and

1 WHEREAS, The labor journey of Black Americans in Colorado
2 began before Colorado was ratified as a state, with enslaved persons
3 brought to Colorado to support and labor for settlers, including some of
4 Colorado's founders; nevertheless, many escaped and former slaves found
5 their way to Colorado in pursuit of the freedom to read, build families,
6 and develop opportunities; and

7 WHEREAS, Nat Love and James Beckwourth, often called
8 "mountain men" or the pejorative to white cowhands, "cowboys",
9 cultivated skills in mountaineering, fur trapping, and driving cattle in
10 Colorado to contribute to the settling of the West; and

11 WHEREAS, Former slaves Barney Ford and Clara Brown built
12 hotels, shelters, restaurants, and other businesses to support burgeoning
13 mining trades in Colorado; their wealth and influence helped them shape
14 the way Colorado would be ratified as a state in the Union; and

15 WHEREAS, A Black man, Henry O. Wagoner, brother-in-law to
16 Barney Ford and mentor to the sons of Frederick Douglass, was appointed
17 a clerk in the first Colorado state legislature; and

18 WHEREAS, Representatives John T. Gunnell and Joseph H.
19 Stuart, Colorado's first and second Black representatives, served
20 Arapahoe County from 1881 to 1883 and from 1895 to 1897,
21 respectively; Representative Gunnell sponsored House Bill 57 in 1881,
22 which concerned tenants-at-will, or monthly renters, and Representative
23 Stuart worked on a bill to ensure equal access to public places, regardless
24 of a person's race; and

25 WHEREAS, In 1910, O. T. Jackson joined the movement to
26 homestead and founded Dearfield, Colorado, a community that
27 exemplifies the ingenuity, industry, and work ethic of Black Coloradans;
28 high agricultural demand during World War I proved a boon for the
29 community, which grew squash, pumpkins, watermelon, beans, corn,
30 potatoes, cabbage, tomatoes, and livestock; and

31 WHEREAS, Despite the contributions of Black Americans to the
32 development of the state of Colorado, progress for Black Americans in
33 Colorado stalled throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth
34 centuries; Black workers in Colorado held essential but low-wage
35 positions, and as of 1930, almost 90 percent of Black women in Denver
36 worked in domestic service, and nearly two-thirds of Black men in

1 Denver worked as laborers or slightly elevated porters; and

2 WHEREAS, 2025 marks the 100-year anniversary of the creation
3 of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids, the first Black
4 union to receive a charter in the American Federation of Labor, by labor
5 organizer and civil rights activist A. Philip Randolph; Martin Luther
6 King, Jr. incorporated issues outlined by Randolph's March on
7 Washington Movement, such as economic justice, into his Poor People's
8 Campaign; and

9 WHEREAS, Black veterans returning from World War II were
10 stationed in or relocated to Colorado and used their military and job
11 training, as well as the educational opportunities provided by the G.I. Bill,
12 to fight and ensure that the values of freedom they fought for overseas
13 would be upheld for Black people in Colorado; and

14 WHEREAS, This generation of Black people in Colorado fought
15 and accessed the middle class and spawned civil and elected leaders like
16 Lieutenant Governor George Brown, Regent Rachel B. Noel, Boulder
17 Mayor Penfield Tate II, Representative Arie Taylor, Secretary of State
18 Victoria Buckley, and more, all of whom committed to ensure Black
19 people had access to education, professional jobs, business, voting, and
20 housing across segregated lines; and

21 WHEREAS, Tuskegee Airmen like James Reynolds led the
22 Denver branch of the Congress of Racial Equality, or CORE, as the group
23 organized protests from sit-ins to freedom rides across the country, and
24 members Wilma and Wellington Webb and Anna Jo Haynes would go on
25 to end policies rooted in racism, such as redlining and school segregation;
26 and

27 WHEREAS, In 1951, Colorado became the second state in the
28 Mountain West (after New Mexico) to enact a fair employment law, and
29 in 1957, the state passed a fair employment bill covering both private and
30 public employers, placing enforcement under an independent agency, the
31 Colorado Anti-Discrimination Commission, where Mr. Reynolds would
32 later become a commissioner; and

33 WHEREAS, Black Americans have focused on examining three
34 particular eras of Black history to pursue enlightenment and true equality:
35 Looking to history and beliefs in values to be freed first from bondage;
36 then to be freed from overtly oppressive laws and policies designed to

1 separate and disenfranchise; and now, presently, to mitigate the impact of
2 such laws through examining and dismantling lingering systems; and to
3 this end, Black Coloradans continue to advocate for and pioneer equity
4 to achieve equality for all; now, therefore,

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

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

10 (2) That the General Assembly recognizes February of 2025 as
11 Black History Month to celebrate the rich cultural heritage, impact, and
12 triumphs of, and acknowledge the adversities faced as a part of, the
13 African diaspora in the United States and in Colorado.

14 *Be It Further Resolved,* That copies of this Joint Resolution be sent
15 to History Colorado, Governor Jared Polis, and the members of
16 Colorado's congressional delegation.