



HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 25-1009

BY REPRESENTATIVE(S) Bacon and English, Carter, Joseph, Ricks, Bird, Boesenecker, Brown, Caldwell, Camacho, Clifford, Duran, Espenosa, Feret, Froelich, Garcia, Gilchrist, Gonzalez R., Hamrick, Hartsook, Jackson, Lieder, Lindsay, Lindstedt, Lukens, Mabrey, Marshall, Martinez, Mauro, McCormick, Paschal, Phillips, Pugliese, Rutinel, Rydin, Sirota, Smith, Soper, Stewart K., Stewart R., Story, Suckla, Taggart, Titone, Valdez, Velasco, Willford, Winter T., Zokaie, McCluskie;

also SENATOR(S) Coleman and Exum, Amabile, Baisley, Ball, Bridges, Bright, Carson, Catlin, Cutter, Daugherty, Frizell, Gonzales J., Hinrichsen, Jaquez Lewis, Jodeh, Kipp, Kirkmeyer, Kolker, Liston, Lundeen, Marchman, Michaelson Jenet, Mullica, Pelton B., Pelton R., Rich, Roberts, Rodriguez, Simpson, Snyder, Sullivan, Weissman, Winter F..

CONCERNING RECOGNIZING FEBRUARY OF 2025 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 110th anniversary this year and designated the 2025 Black History Month theme as "African Americans and Labor", focusing on the various and profound ways that work and working of all kinds, free and unfree, skilled and unskilled, vocational and voluntary, intersect with the collective experiences of Black people and the American people; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, In 1951, Colorado became the second state in the Mountain West (after New Mexico) to enact a fair employment law, and in 1957, the state passed a fair employment bill covering both private and public employers, placing enforcement under an independent agency, the Colorado Anti-Discrimination Commission, where Mr. Reynolds would later become a commissioner; 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 House of Representatives of the Seventy-fifth General Assembly of the State of Colorado, the Senate concurring herein:

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

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

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

Julie McCluskie
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES

James Rashad Coleman Sr.
PRESIDENT OF
THE SENATE

Vanessa Reilly
CHIEF CLERK OF THE HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES

Esther van Mourik
SECRETARY OF
THE SENATE