

California Legislature—2015–16 Regular Session

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 118

Introduced by Assembly Members McCarty, Brown, Burke, Cooper, Gipson, Holden, Jones-Sawyer, Ridley-Thomas, Thurmond, and Weber

January 13, 2016

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 118—Relative to Black History Month.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

ACR 118, as introduced, McCarty. Black History Month.

This measure would recognize February 2016 as Black History Month, urge all citizens to join in celebrating the accomplishments of African Americans during Black History Month, and encourage the people of California to recognize the many talents, achievements, and contributions that African Americans make to their communities.

Fiscal committee: no.

WHEREAS, Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson, distinguished African American author, editor, publisher, and historian, who is known as the “Father of Black History,” founded Negro History Week in 1926, which became Black History Month in 1976, intended to encourage further research and publishing regarding the untold stories of African American heritage; and

WHEREAS, The history of African Americans here in the United States, as well as throughout the ages, is indeed unique and vibrant, and it is appropriate to celebrate this history during the month of February 2016, which has been proclaimed as Black History Month; and

WHEREAS, There is even greater cause for reverent celebration in 2016 as Americans reflect on the significance of the 150th anniversary of the proposal of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which granted due process and equal protection under the law to all citizens, and at the same time granted citizenship to African Americans; and

WHEREAS, The history of the United States is rich with inspirational stories of great men and noble women whose actions, words, and achievements have united Americans and contributed to the success and prosperity of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The slave trade was a tragic episode in African history and began before August 1619 when the first slaves arrived in Jamestown, Virginia. During the course of the slave trade, an estimated 50 million African men, women, and children were lost to their native continent, though only about 15 million arrived safely to a new home. The others lost their lives on African soil or along the Guinea coast, or finally in holds on the ships during the dreaded Middle Passage across the Atlantic Ocean; and

WHEREAS, The first American to shed blood in the revolution that freed America from British rule was Crispus Attucks (March 5, 1770, Boston Massacre), an African American seaman and slave. African Americans also fought in wars including the Battles of Lexington and Concord in April 1775, the Battle of Rhode Island on August 29, 1778, the battles of Ticonderoga, White Plains, Bennington, Brandywine, Saratoga, Savannah, Yorktown, Bunker Hill, and other revolutionary war battles; the War of 1812, including the Battle of New Orleans; the Civil War, the Spanish-American War; World Wars I and II, Korea, and the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, In spite of the African slave trade, many Africans and African Americans continued to move forward in society; during the Reconstruction period, two African Americans served in the United States Senate and 14 sat in the House of Representatives; and

WHEREAS, From the earliest days of the United States, the course of its history has been greatly influenced by Black heroes and pioneers in many diverse areas, from science, medicine, business, and education to government, industry, and social leadership; and

WHEREAS, Africans and African Americans have also been great inventors, inventing and improving things such as the air-conditioning unit, almanac, automatic gearshift, blood plasma bag, clothes dryer, doorknob, doorstop, electric lamp bulb, elevator, fire escape ladder, fountain pen, gas mask, golf tee, horseshoe, lantern, lawnmower, lawn sprinkler, lock, lubricating cup, refrigerating apparatus, spark plug, stethoscope, telephone transmitter, thermostat control, traffic signal, and typewriter; and

WHEREAS, A number of these brave and accomplished individuals, such as Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, Matthew Henson, Daniel Hale Williams, Dr. Charles Drew, Jackie Robinson, Jesse Owens, Curt Flood, Medgar Evers, and, of course, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., are noted prominently in the history books of students nationwide, thus enabling them to learn about the important and lasting contributions of these individuals; and

WHEREAS, Among those Americans who have enriched our society are the members of the African American community--individuals who have been steadfast in their commitment to promoting brotherhood, equality, and justice for all; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature takes great pleasure in recognizing February 2016 as Black History Month, urges all citizens to join in celebrating the accomplishments of African Americans during Black History Month, and encourages the people of California to recognize the many talents, achievements, and contributions that African Americans make to their communities; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.