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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2009

H O U S E R E S O L U T I O N

DESIGNATING THE MONTH OF MAY AS "RACIAL PROFILING AWARENESS MONTH"

Introduced By: Representatives Williams, Almeida, Diaz, Ajello, and Slater

Date Introduced: May 14, 2009

Referred To: House Constituent Services

1 WHEREAS, In 2000, the Rhode Island General Assembly declared that “the use of racial
2 profiling for stopping or searching motorists on our public highways is against public policy and
3 violates the civil rights of the motorists”; and

4 WHEREAS, Municipal and state law enforcement officers play a vital role in protecting
5 the public from crime, and the vast majority of police officers discharge their duties
6 professionally and without bias; and

7 WHEREAS, In 2003, an independent analysis by Northeastern University of two years’
8 worth of traffic stops data collected by police departments across the state found that African-
9 American and Latino drivers were more likely than white drivers to be stopped, and more than
10 twice as likely as white drivers to be searched by police; and

11 WHEREAS, In 2004, this General Assembly, in finding that some law enforcement
12 practices may have the unintended effect of promoting racially disparate stops and searches,
13 further required police departments to collect traffic stop information for an additional year; and

14 WHEREAS, In 2006, an independent analysis by Northeastern University of that data
15 continued to find that African-American and Latino drivers remained more likely than white
16 drivers to be stopped and searched, even though white drivers were more likely to be found with
17 contraband when searched; and

18 WHEREAS, A more recent independent analysis of traffic stops data from the Rhode
19 Island State Police found that “there continues to be racial and ethnic disparity in the stops made
20 by Rhode Island State Police” and that there is “substantial evidence of racial and ethnic disparity

1 in discretionary searches by the Rhode Island State Police in 2006”; and

2 WHEREAS, As this General Assembly has previously found that “racial profiling harms
3 individuals subjected to it because they experience fear, anxiety, humiliation, anger, resentment
4 and cynicism when they are unjustifiably treated as criminal suspects”; and

5 WHEREAS, Racial profiling damages law enforcement and the criminal justice system
6 as a whole by undermining public confidence and trust in the police, the courts, and criminal law,
7 and thereby undermines law enforcement efforts and ability to solve and reduce crime; and

8 WHEREAS, Many people are not aware of the problem of racial profiling in the state or
9 the availability of remedies for conduct that violates the Racial Profiling Prevention Act of 2004;
10 and

11 WHEREAS, Numerous community organizations are working throughout the month of
12 May to educate the public and members of their communities about the issues surrounding racial
13 profiling and their rights to be free from biased-based policing; and

14 WHEREAS, Those organizations include such diverse groups as the Urban League of
15 Rhode Island, Ocean State Action, Progreso Latino, the Rhode Island State Council of Churches,
16 the International Institute of Rhode Island, Direct Actions for Rights and Equality, and the
17 Providence Youth Student Movement; now, therefore be it

18 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island and
19 Providence Plantations hereby proclaims May 2009 as “Racial Profiling Awareness Month,” and
20 urges all residents to learn about the issue of bias-based policing and to work with community
21 groups, police departments and others in addressing this problem; and be it further

22 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and he is hereby authorized and directed to
23 transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to the Urban League of Rhode Island, Ocean State
24 Action, Progreso Latino, the Rhode Island State Council of Churches, the International Institute
25 of Rhode Island, Direct Actions for Rights and Equality, and the Providence Youth Student
26 Movement.

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