

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2019

SENATE RESOLUTION

PROCLAIMING THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY AS "BLACK HISTORY MONTH" IN THE
STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

Introduced By: Senators Metts, Quezada, Ruggerio, Conley, and Felag

Date Introduced: February 27, 2019

Referred To: Recommended for Immediate Consideration

1 WHEREAS, Throughout the history of America, truly significant African-American
2 contributions to the economy, social growth, sciences, and arts in this great nation have all too
3 often been ignored. In recognition of this plethora of major accomplishments made by men and
4 women of African ancestry, the month of February is celebrated as "Black History Month" across
5 the nation; and

6 WHEREAS, African-Americans were first brought to America forcibly. They were
7 enslaved, faced inhuman cruelty, and were subjected to injustices beyond understanding. Families
8 were torn apart, lynching went unpunished, and segregation and denial of fundamental
9 constitutional rights and protections went on for decades; and

10 WHEREAS, Though these men and women suffered immense tragedies and social
11 inequalities, they also persevered, and their triumphs and contributions to the economic, artistic,
12 literary, scientific, and technological advancement of our country are significant and momentous;
13 and

14 WHEREAS, African-Americans have been an integral part of Rhode Island's social,
15 political, and economic development from its beginning as a British colony, to its inclusion in the
16 formation of the United States, to the rich diversity of today's Ocean State; and

17 WHEREAS, From the initial shots fired in the struggle for American Independence, to
18 the Rhode Island 1st Black Regiment's Battle of Newport, to the garrisons of the Rhode Island 14th
19 Heavy Artillery Regiment (Colored) in 1863, Americans of African descent have responded to

1 the call of duty; and

2 WHEREAS, In recognition of the numerous positive and patriotic contributions of
3 African-American Rhode Islanders in the United States military, we honor their legacy of
4 bravery, honor, and sacrifice. From the earliest recordation of Black History in our state,
5 including those of slaves, former slaves, and free men, African-Americans have served with pride
6 to protect our vital interests and provide for our common defense; and

7 WHEREAS, Structures in the City of Newport, such as the Brick Market, later used as
8 the town hall and theater; the Old Colony House, which at one time served Rhode Island as its
9 capitol; and the oldest library in America, the Redwood Library, stand as lasting and beautiful
10 tributes to the African-Americans who lived in our state and played a major role in the
11 construction of these magnificent historic structures; and

12 WHEREAS, The United States and particularly the State of Rhode Island owe a debt of
13 gratitude to our African-American citizens and their forefathers, whose documented
14 achievements have too long gone unrecognized; and

15 WHEREAS, This year's celebration of "Black History Month" holds a special place in the
16 hearts and minds of all Americans. Men such as civil rights leader Jesse Jackson, who sought the
17 Democratic presidential nomination in 1984 and 1988, opened the doors to a new generation of
18 African-American political leaders. Standing on the shoulders of trailblazers before him, former
19 President Barack Obama articulated a message of change that also gave hope to many; now,
20 therefore be it

21 RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
22 hereby proudly proclaims February as "Black History Month," and furthermore recognizes and
23 applauds the sacrifices and myriad of contributions made by African-American men and women
24 throughout this great nation's history; and be it further

25 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
26 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society.

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