

2020 -- H 7423

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2020

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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

Introduced By: Representatives Williams, Almeida, Ranglin-Vassell, Alzate, and Diaz

Date Introduced: February 04, 2020

Referred To: House read and passed

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 1<sup>st</sup> Black Regiment's Battle of Newport, to the garrisons of the Rhode Island 14<sup>th</sup>  
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, The theme for this year's celebration of "Black History Month" is "African  
16 Americans and the Vote." The year 2020 is a landmark year for voting rights. It is the 150<sup>th</sup>  
17 Anniversary of the Fifteenth Amendment which explicitly gave black men the right to vote in the  
18 United States. Those rights had been illegally denied by numerous states until 1965. This year's  
19 theme recognizes the historical struggle for voting rights experienced by people of color  
20 throughout American history; now, therefore be it

21 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island and  
22 Providence Plantations hereby proudly proclaims February as "Black History Month," and  
23 furthermore recognizes and applauds the sacrifices and myriad of contributions made by African-  
24 American men and women 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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