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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2014

SENATE RESOLUTION

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

Introduced By: Senators Metts, Paiva Weed, Pichardo, Goodwin, and Felag

Date Introduced: February 12, 2014

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 of 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
16 the hearts and minds of all Americans. Men and women like Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm,
17 who sought the Democratic nomination for President in 1972, and civil rights leader Jesse
18 Jackson, who sought the Democratic presidential nomination in the 1984 and 1988 elections,
19 opened the doors to a new generation of African-American political leaders. Standing on the
20 shoulders of trailblazers before him, President Barack Obama has articulated a message of change
21 that has given hope for a truly united nation; now, therefore be it

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

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

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