



HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 26-1005

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 also SENATOR(S) Exum and Coleman, Amabile, Baisley, Ball, Bright, Carson, Catlin, Cutter, Danielson, Frizell, Gonzales J., Hinrichsen, Jodeh, Kipp, Kirkmeyer, Kolker, Lindstedt, Liston, Michaelson Jenet, Mullica, Pelton B., Pelton R., Rich, Roberts, Rodriguez, Snyder, Wallace, Weissman, Zamora Wilson.

CONCERNING RECOGNITION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN VETERANS.

WHEREAS, The military history of African Americans spans from the arrival of the first enslaved Africans during the colonial history of the United States to the present day; and

WHEREAS, Throughout the history of the United States, African Americans have honorably served in every military conflict fought by the nation, often facing segregation, discrimination, and limited opportunities while courageously defending our nation; and

WHEREAS, African Americans, despite being confined by the segregation prevalent in our country, still chose the path of military service to prove their worth as people and citizens; and

WHEREAS, Through their dedication and valor, African American service members demonstrated their unwavering commitment to the ideals of democracy and equality, even when those ideals were not extended to them, and they ultimately helped to lay the groundwork for the broader civil rights movement; and

WHEREAS, Even though many African American men and women have tragically lost their lives in service to their country, these and countless other African Americans chose the path of military service to prove their worth, regain a sense of dignity, and secure a place of honor within a society that often denied them fundamental rights. Through their bravery, resilience, and determination, these individuals not only served in defense of our nation but also fought for their right to stand as equals alongside their fellow service members; and

WHEREAS, The military has long served as a unique arena in which African American men and women could rise through the ranks, challenging societal limitations and breaking barriers that confined them to second-class status; and

WHEREAS, Despite facing segregation, discrimination, and unequal treatment both within and outside of military service, African American veterans persevered, demonstrating excellence, leadership, and a deep commitment to duty, thus paving the way for future generations of African American service members to continue the fight for equality, justice, and respect within the armed forces and throughout American society; and

WHEREAS, African American veterans have played pivotal roles in every war fought by the United States, including the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Mexican-American War, the Civil War, the Indian Wars, the Spanish-American War, both World Wars, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Persian Gulf War, and conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, demonstrating exceptional bravery and dedication; and

WHEREAS, During the Civil War, approximately 180,000 African American soldiers served in the Union Army, making up nearly 10% of its total force, and an additional 19,000 served in the Navy; President Abraham Lincoln praised their courage, writing, "with silent tongue, and clenched teeth, and steady eye, and well-poised bayonet, they have helped

mankind on to this great consummation"; and

WHEREAS, During World War I, more than 380,000 African Americans served in the United States military, many of whom faced segregation and discrimination while making invaluable contributions to the war effort, like the Harlem Hellfighters infantry regiment, who spent 191 days on the front and were showered with honors for their valor by the French soldiers they fought beside; and

WHEREAS, During World War II, more than 1.25 million African Americans served in the United States military, including in combat and support roles. More than 70% of the drivers on the Red Ball Express, the famed trucking supply route and logistics operation, were African American. They drove throughout the night and day in these vital roles, dodging land mines and the threat of enemy aircraft to support "the lifeline between combat and supply", as General Eisenhower wrote, moving ammunition, fuel, food, and medical supplies to the battlefield. Their work hastened the surrender of the Germans and the end of the war on the Western Front. These soldiers and the many other African Americans who served throughout World War II broke barriers that paved the way for the desegregation of the armed forces; and

WHEREAS, Despite the dedication and sacrifice of African American service members, many military authorities have historically been skeptical of their patriotism, questioning their loyalty and commitment to the nation they bravely served. This skepticism persisted prior to the end of slavery, through Reconstruction, and well into the 20th century. Even as African Americans fought valiantly in wars such as the Civil War, World War I, and World War II, they were often relegated to segregated units, given less prestigious assignments, or denied the recognition they deserved; and

WHEREAS, This unjust treatment continued, despite the work of the courageous servicemen and servicewomen and those who advocated for them. Finally, in 1948, after the President's Committee on Civil Rights concluded that segregation was "indefensible" and that "by preventing entire groups from making their maximum contribution to the national defense, we weaken our defense", President Harry S. Truman issued Executive Order 9981, which required "equality of treatment and opportunity for all" in the armed forces. However, even after this official

policy change, African American veterans continued to face barriers to full equality in the military, struggling against systemic racism, discrimination, and unequal opportunities for advancement, despite their proven dedication to defending the very freedoms that often eluded them in civilian life; and

WHEREAS, The implementation of Executive Order 9981 marked a turning point in United States military history, leading to the gradual integration of African Americans into all branches of the armed forces and paving the way for broader civil rights advancements in American society. However, despite this order, desegregation of the military was not fully realized for several years, and all-African-American units persisted well into the Korean War, with the last all-African-American unit not being disbanded until 1954; and

WHEREAS, Despite their unwavering service, African American veterans have historically been denied equal rights and benefits, including access to the GI Bill, housing assistance, and other veteran services, highlighting the need for continued advocacy and justice; and

WHEREAS, While African American service members continue to demonstrate vigilance and resilience in all aspects of military service, there remains much work to be done in the pursuit of equality, opportunity, and recognition. African American men and women have led the charge in advocating for a more inclusive military, clearing a path for future generations to serve with dignity and pride. Their tireless efforts have not only secured a place for them within the military but have also opened doors for other African Americans to excel in leadership roles, advancing both military service and broader societal progress; and

WHEREAS, The African American community takes great pride in the enduring legacies left by those who have served, and they continue to build upon the foundation of excellence, determination, and courage laid by those who came before, ensuring that their contributions are remembered and that their history serves as an inspiration for the next generation of service members and leaders; and

WHEREAS, The Tuskegee Airmen, the first group of African American military pilots in the United States armed forces during World War II; the Buffalo Soldiers, whose first regiments were formed and

forged on the frontier; the Montford Point Marines, the first African Americans to say "Semper Fi" at Camp Lejeune; and countless other African American military units and individuals have left an indelible mark on United States history, inspiring future generations and reshaping the armed forces; and

WHEREAS, The late Lieutenant Colonel Clarence Shivers and Colonel James Harvey III stand as towering figures in African American military history, particularly in the context of the Tuskegee Airmen. Lieutenant Colonel Shivers, a distinguished member of the Tuskegee Airmen, served with bravery and distinction during World War II in the 332nd Fighter Group, which was known for its distinctive red-tailed aircraft and played a significant role in escorting bombers during missions over Europe. His legacy is immortalized with a statue dedicated to him at the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, symbolizing his remarkable contributions to the United States Air Force and the struggle for equality in military service. Shivers retired in 1969, having proven himself an integral part of the Tuskegee Airmen, a group of pioneering African American pilots who shattered racial barriers in aviation; and

WHEREAS, Colonel James Harvey III made his mark as one of the first African American officers in the United States Air Force. Harvey's leadership and service during and after World War II continue to inspire future generations of airmen. As a member of the Tuskegee Airmen, he helped pave the way for the eventual integration of the United States Air Force and contributed to the desegregation of the military; and

WHEREAS, Both Lieutenant Colonel Shivers' and Colonel Harvey's careers exemplify the courage, resilience, and professionalism of African American service members in the face of adversity, making them iconic figures in the history of Colorado military service; and

WHEREAS, Cathay Williams made history in 1866 as the first African American woman to serve in the United States military. She joined the 38th United States Infantry Regiment, which was stationed in the western frontier during the post-Civil War era. She was honorably discharged and passed away in Colorado, and her memorial is in Pueblo; and

WHEREAS, Wanda James, a distinguished veteran of the United States Navy, made history as the first African American woman to be a part of the Naval ROTC program at the University of Colorado Boulder. Her groundbreaking service in the Navy paved the way for future generations of African American women to pursue military careers. In her continued commitment to public service and higher education, James currently serves as a member of the University of Colorado Board of Regents, where she has made a profound and lasting impact on the lives of students, advocating for inclusive policies and supporting initiatives that foster academic excellence, diversity, and leadership development within the university community; and

WHEREAS, Leslie Summey, a United States Navy veteran, is the first African American person to ever be elected as a Commissioner on the Arapahoe County Board of County Commissioners and was sworn into office on January 9, 2023. Her current term expires January 2027. She serves as the first African American chair of the Arapahoe County Board of County Commissioners; and

WHEREAS, The 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, known as the "Six Triple Eight", was an all-African-American, all-female unit during World War II, playing a critical role in maintaining morale and communication between United States soldiers stationed overseas and their families back home. This battalion, which served in Europe, was tasked with sorting and delivering delayed mail to troops, facing tremendous challenges due to the sheer volume of undelivered packages. The women of the 6888th, led by Lieutenant Colonel Charity Adams Earley, displayed incredible determination and dedication, working around the clock to ensure that soldiers received their letters and supplies; and

WHEREAS, The 6888th's contributions were overlooked for many years, but their service was integral to the success of wartime efforts and a milestone in the integration of women into the military. The 6888th is now recognized as one of the most important units in African American and women's military history; and

WHEREAS, John W. Mosley Jr. persevered through adversity throughout his life, inspired by his father, John W. Mosley Sr., who was born into slavery and migrated west to Colorado in the 1880s, during the silver boom, seeking opportunity. In an era of Jim Crow laws, Mosley Sr. secured employment as a Pullman porter, one of the few jobs available to African American workers at the time; and

WHEREAS, In 1939, John W. Mosley Jr. enrolled at the Agricultural College of Colorado, now Colorado State University, becoming the first African American letterman in the school's history. Many refer to him as the Jackie Robinson of CSU athletics. In 1998, Mosley Jr. was inducted into the CSU Sports Hall of Fame, and in 2009, he was admitted into the Colorado Sports Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, After college, Mosley Jr. joined the Tuskegee Airmen and trained as a bomber pilot, one of the first African Americans to do so. Lieutenant Colonel Mosley served for over 25 years on active and reserve duty, including during World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. He participated in the Berlin Airlift, achieved the rank of command pilot, and served as both a trainer and mentor to young pilots. Mosley Jr. often remarked, "I had to fight in order to fight!"; and

WHEREAS, In 2015, Aurora Public Schools dedicated a school for children in preschool to 8th grade, Edna and John W. Mosley P-8, to Mosley Jr. and his wife. Open since October 1, 2015, near Airport Boulevard and Second Avenue in Aurora, Colorado, the school currently serves over 900 students; and

WHEREAS, In 2021, Congress proposed a bill to dedicate the newly built VA community-based outpatient clinic in Aurora, Colorado, to Lieutenant Colonel Mosley. The ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on January 27, 2025, and the clinic opened its doors to veterans on February 3, joining the VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System, which serves over 100,000 veterans annually; and

WHEREAS, The contributions of African American veterans extend beyond the battlefield, as they have continued to serve their communities as leaders, activists, educators, and public servants; and

WHEREAS, Recognizing the sacrifices and achievements of African American veterans is essential to ensuring their legacy is honored and their stories are preserved for future generations; and

WHEREAS, We formally acknowledge and honor the extraordinary service and sacrifices of African American veterans throughout United States history; now, therefore,

Be It Resolved by the House of Representatives of the Seventy-fifth General Assembly of the State of Colorado, the Senate concurring herein:

That we, the General Assembly, in recognition of the heroic efforts and significant sacrifices of African American veterans:

(1) Support efforts to ensure African American veterans receive equitable access to benefits, health care, and resources that they have rightfully earned through their service;

(2) Encourage educational initiatives, museums, and historical institutions to highlight the contributions of African American veterans, ensuring their stories are shared and celebrated;

(3) During Black History Month and beyond, commit to recognizing African American veterans' valor, perseverance, and patriotism, affirming our dedication to justice, equality, and the honor of their sacrifices; and

(4) Encourage the commemoration of African American veterans throughout both the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Be It Further Resolved, That copies of this Joint Resolution be sent to the Congressional Black Caucus; the National Black Caucus of State Legislators; the Retired Enlisted Association; the Tuskegee Airmen, Inc.; the Colorado Black Women for Political Action; State Immediate Past Commander Carol Thomas, Department of Colorado Veterans of Foreign Wars; the American Legion Department of Colorado; the United Veterans Coalition of Colorado; the Disabled American Veterans Department of Colorado; the Mountain States Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America; Colonel James H. Harvey III; Mrs. Peggy Shivers, the wife of the late Lieutenant Colonel Clarence Shivers; and Aaron Futrell, grandson of John W. Mosley Jr.

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