

IN THE SENATE

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 133

BY BUCKNER-WEBB, BURGOYNE, LACEY, WARD-ENGELKING

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

STATING FINDINGS OF THE LEGISLATURE AND COMMEMORATING AND RECOGNIZING THE  
MONTH OF FEBRUARY AS BLACK HISTORY MONTH IN IDAHO.

Be It Resolved by the Legislature of the State of Idaho:

WHEREAS, just ninety years ago, in 1926, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, a scholar and historian who was the son of former slaves, founded Negro History Week as an educational initiative to bring attention to the history and contributions of Black people throughout American history; and

WHEREAS, the second week of February was chosen because it marks the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln, two men who greatly influenced the course of history of Black Americans; and

WHEREAS, the month of February is also significant in the history of African Americans for being the month when the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded; when the 15th Amendment to the United States Constitution was passed, granting African American men the right to vote; when the first Black U.S. Senator Hiram R. Revels took his oath of office; and when Bernard A. Harris, Jr. became the first Black astronaut to walk in space; and

WHEREAS, while the number of Black people in Idaho has never exceeded one percent of the total population, they have nevertheless made significant contributions to Idaho; and

WHEREAS, the first recorded Black American in Idaho was York, the manservant of Captain William Clark, arriving in 1805 during the Lewis and Clark Expedition to the Pacific; and

WHEREAS, in 1867, Elvina Moulton, a former slave, followed the Oregon Trail to Boise. She stayed in Boise and undertook sewing and laundry work, saving her money and eventually buying her own home on Idaho Street next door to Boise Mayor James H. Hawley. She was also the only Black member among the prominent women who were charter members of Boise's First Presbyterian Church; and

WHEREAS, the 25th Infantry Regiment (known as the Buffalo Soldiers) risked their lives to save hundreds of men, women and children in the towns of Avery and Wallace, Idaho, during the Bitterroot Range wildfires in 1910. They built trails for fire crews, escorted families out of town to safety, helped keep the peace, evacuated towns and helped to light backfires when the great firestorm surrounded the community of Avery, and helped to retrieve the bodies of the townspeople and firefighters who didn't survive the conflagration; and

WHEREAS, in the latter part of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, African Americans arrived in Idaho to work in the mines, on the railroads, and eventually on the military bases located in Boise and Pocatello during World War II; and

1           WHEREAS, during this era, Black Idahoans faced restrictions as to where  
2 they were permitted to live, what work they were permitted to engage in, and  
3 whether they could join unions, eat in restaurants or attend theaters and  
4 churches; and

5           WHEREAS, the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed after being  
6 co-sponsored by U.S. Senator Frank Church from Idaho; and

7           WHEREAS, seven hundred Black and White Idahoans rallied on the Capitol  
8 steps in April 1968 to call for a stronger state civil rights law and better  
9 enforcement through creation of a state human rights commission; and

10          WHEREAS, under the leadership of then-Senator Phil Batt, the Idaho Hu-  
11 man Rights Act was passed in 1969, prohibiting discrimination in employment,  
12 education, real estate transactions and public accommodations on the basis  
13 of race, sex, color, national origin and religion; and

14          WHEREAS, during the civil rights movement, Negro History Week was re-  
15 designated as Black History Week; and

16          WHEREAS, in 1976, as part of the nation's bicentennial, Black History  
17 Week was expanded and established as Black History Month with the hope that  
18 through this special observance, all Americans would be reminded of their  
19 ethnic roots and develop a mutual respect for the contributions of all racial  
20 groups in America; and

21          WHEREAS, Les Purce was the first Black elected official in Idaho, voted  
22 onto the Pocatello City Council and then becoming the city's mayor three  
23 years later in 1976; and

24          WHEREAS, Cherie Buckner-Webb was the first Black person to be elected  
25 in the Idaho State House of Representatives in 2010 and to the Idaho State  
26 Senate in 2012; and

27          WHEREAS, history teaches us that Black citizens in Idaho have struggled  
28 against slavery, prejudice and discrimination in employment, housing, pub-  
29 lic accommodations and education over the course of our nation's history;  
30 and

31          WHEREAS, history also reveals that Black Idahoans have met these strug-  
32 gles bravely and contributed their many talents, achievements and contribu-  
33 tions to their communities in Idaho; and

34          WHEREAS, Black History Month is an opportunity for all Idahoans to com-  
35 memorate the struggles and victories of Black Americans in our history and  
36 to recognize their valuable contributions to society and to the state and na-  
37 tion's defense in war and peace.

38          NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the members of the Second Regular Ses-  
39 sion of the Sixty-third Idaho Legislature, the Senate and the House of Rep-  
40 resentatives concurring therein, that we do hereby commemorate and recog-  
41 nize the month of February 2016 as Black History Month in Idaho and encourage  
42 Idaho citizens to reflect on the complex history of minorities in Idaho and  
43 the United States, and to look to the future and strive to continue to improve  
44 society so that we live up to the ideals of freedom, equality and justice for  
45 all.