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ACR-19 Black History Month. (2019-2020)

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Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 19

CHAPTER 15

Relative to Black History Month.

[Filed with Secretary of State March 11, 2019.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 19, Weber. Black History Month.

This measure would recognize February 2019 as Black History Month, urge all citizens to join in celebrating the accomplishments of African Americans during Black History Month, and encourage the people of California to recognize the many talents of African Americans and the achievements and contributions they make to their communities to create equity and equality for education, economics, and social justice.

Fiscal Committee: no

WHEREAS, The history of the United States is rich with inspirational stories of great individuals whose actions, words, and achievements have united Americans and contributed to the success and prosperity of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Among those Americans who have enriched our society are the members of the African American community, individuals whose accomplishments have contributed to every endeavor throughout the history of our nation and who have been steadfast in their commitment to promoting brotherhood, equality, and justice for all; and

WHEREAS, August 2019 will mark 400 years since the first arrival of Africans to present-day America, and the United States Congress has established the 400 Years of African-American History Commission to commemorate the historic heritage and contributions that Americans of African descent have made to help shape the cultural, academic, social, economic, and moral attributes of this nation; and

WHEREAS, In August 1619, the first documented Africans arrived in the English colony of Virginia. The group, recorded upon arrival as "20 and odd Negroes," was part of a larger group of West Africans enslaved by Portuguese slave traders. They were on their way to Veracruz aboard a Portuguese ship when they were captured off the coast of Mexico by an English warship and transported to Virginia, where they were put ashore at what is now Hampton, Virginia, and sold as involuntary laborers or indentured servants; and

WHEREAS, Slavery had not yet been institutionalized, so the Africans were informed they would work under contract for a certain period of time before being granted freedom and the rights afforded other settlers. However, while European indentured servants were listed along with their year of expected freedom, no such information accompanied the names of the African indentured servants; and

WHEREAS, The historic arrival of the group of “20 and odd Negroes” marked the beginning of the trend in colonial America where people of Africa were taken unwillingly from their homeland and transplanted to a foreign land, where they were condemned to a lifetime of slavery and racial discrimination; and

WHEREAS, During the course of the slave trade, an estimated 50 million African men, women, and children were lost to their native continent, though only about 15 million arrived safely to a new home. The others lost their lives on African soil or along the Guinea coast, or finally in holds on the ships during the dreaded Middle Passage across the Atlantic Ocean; and

WHEREAS, In spite of the African slave trade, Africans and African Americans continued to move forward in society; during the Reconstruction period, 2 African Americans served in the United States Senate and 14 sat in the House of Representatives; and

WHEREAS, In 2012, California historically elected the most African Americans to serve in the Legislature, totaling 12 members; and

WHEREAS, This year, 2019, marks the highest number of African American members serving in the United States Congress, totaling 55 members; and

WHEREAS, In 2008, the first African American President of the United States was elected; and

WHEREAS, In 2012, President Barack H. Obama was elected to serve a second term; and

WHEREAS, Africans and African Americans have been great inventors, inventing and improving on innovations such as the air-conditioning unit, almanac, automatic gearshift, blood plasma bag, clothes dryer, doorknob, doorstop, electric lamp bulb, elevator, fire escape ladder, fountain pen, gas mask, golf tee, horseshoe, lantern, lawnmower, lawn sprinkler, lock, lubricating cup, refrigerating apparatus, spark plug, stethoscope, telephone transmitter, thermostat control, traffic signal, and typewriter; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature takes great pleasure in recognizing February 2019 as Black History Month, urges all citizens to join in celebrating the accomplishments of African Americans during Black History Month, and encourages the people of California to recognize the many talents of African Americans and the achievements and contributions they make to their communities to create equity and equality for education, economics, and social justice; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.