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**SR-74** (2019-2020)

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ENROLLED FEBRUARY 19, 2020

PASSED IN SENATE FEBRUARY 18, 2020

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2019–2020 REGULAR SESSION

## SENATE RESOLUTION

**NO. 74**

Introduced by Senator Bradford  
(Coauthor: Senator Mitchell)

January 30, 2020

Relative to Black History Month.

### LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SR 74, Bradford.

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, Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson, the distinguished African American author, editor, publisher, and historian who is known as the "Father of Black History," founded Negro History Week in 1926, which became Black History Month in 1976, with the intent to encourage further research and publications regarding the untold stories of African American heritage; 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, 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; and

WHEREAS, From the earliest days of the United States, the course of its history has been greatly influenced by African American heroes and pioneers in many diverse areas, including science, medicine, business, education, government, industry, and social leadership; 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; and

WHEREAS, During the Reconstruction period, 2 African Americans served in the United States Senate and 14 sat in the House of Representatives; and

WHEREAS, This year, 2020, marks the sesquicentennial of the Fifteenth Amendment (1870) and 55 years since the passage of the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965; and

WHEREAS, Before the passage of the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965, voters faced disenfranchisement through poll taxes, literacy tests, and other tactics intended to keep African Americans from the polls on election day; and

WHEREAS, In 2012, California historically elected the most African Americans to serve in the Legislature, totaling 12 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, Despite over 50 years of progress, African Americans continue to face voter discrimination, voter suppression, and voting barriers in jurisdictions with a history of discrimination; and

WHEREAS, To build a stronger and more cohesive state and nation, we must continue to help advance the cause of voter equality and equal access to the political process for all people in order to protect the rights of every American; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, That the Legislature takes great pleasure in recognizing February 2020 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 Legislature recognizes the significance in protecting citizens' right to vote and remedying racial discrimination in voting; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.