

SENATE RESOLUTION

8619

By Senator O'Ban

1 WHEREAS, The institution of slavery denied men and women of color
2 basic rights enshrined in our nation's founding document, the
3 Declaration of Independence; and

4 WHEREAS, Controversy over slavery resulted in the bloodiest war
5 in U.S. history, resulting in the deaths of an estimated 2.5 percent
6 of the population or 504 deaths for every day of the war; and

7 WHEREAS, In an effort to guarantee the union would be preserved,
8 its sacrifices would not be in vain, and that slavery would never
9 taint or divide the nation again, President Abraham Lincoln issued
10 the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 and fought tirelessly and
11 strategically for the passage of the 13th Amendment to the U.S.
12 Constitution, which banned slavery from the United States forever;
13 and

14 WHEREAS, The assassination of Abraham Lincoln brought to the
15 presidency Vice President Andrew Johnson, who lacked commitment to
16 the civil rights of the former slaves of the South; and

17 WHEREAS, President Johnson failed to stand up to efforts within
18 the former confederacy to repress the rights of black Americans
19 through the enactment of "Black Codes" and other discriminatory
20 legislation and practices; and

21 WHEREAS, Congressional leadership forced a reconstruction agenda
22 that expanded civil rights and the promise of a more equal union; and

1 WHEREAS, The agenda of that era included the ratification of
2 the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution,
3 which abolished slavery, ensured the citizenship of former
4 slaves, guaranteed equal protection under the law, and
5 proclaimed the right of citizens to vote regardless of race,
6 color, or previous condition of servitude; and

7 WHEREAS, Over the objections of President Johnson, Congress
8 passed a series of Reconstruction Acts in an attempt to build a
9 more equal union; and

10 WHEREAS, The Reconstruction era led to numerous historic
11 elections within the United States including more than 1,500
12 African-American officeholders, including fourteen members of
13 Congress, six lieutenant governors, and more than six hundred
14 state legislators throughout the south; and

15 WHEREAS, The Reconstruction era led to the election of the
16 first African-American member of Congress, Joseph Hayne Rainey,
17 who served with distinction for the state of South Carolina,
18 fought for civil rights and against the terrorist violence of
19 the Ku Klux Klan, and became the first African-American to
20 preside over the United States House of Representatives by
21 stepping in for Speaker James G. Blaine in April of 1874; and

22 WHEREAS, Also among the notable individuals elected were
23 Hiram Revels of Mississippi, a veteran of the Civil War who
24 became the first African-American senator in 1870; and Blanche
25 K. Bruce, a former sheriff and sergeant at arms for the
26 Mississippi State Senate, who became the second African-American
27 elected to the U.S. Senate in 1874; men whose accomplishments
28 are even more remarkable considering that since then, no
29 African-American man or woman has represented a southern state
30 in the U.S. Senate until 2013 when Tim Scott was elected in
31 South Carolina; and

32 WHEREAS, The Reconstruction era is a key chapter to
33 understanding the story of freedom for all Americans in the
34 United States and is essential to the understanding of the story
35 of freedom for African-Americans in particular; and

36 WHEREAS, The Reconstruction era was cut short by the
37 compromised election of 1878, and the failure to follow through
38 and ensure the success and continuation of Reconstruction era

1 civil rights efforts diminished the progress of racial equality
2 for the next one hundred years; and

3 WHEREAS, The flame of hope from the Reconstruction era faded
4 but never died and was carried by later champions of freedom
5 until it blazed again in the challenge of Dr. Martin Luther King
6 Jr., who called upon the nation to honor the "promissory note"
7 in the "words of the Constitution and the Declaration of
8 Independence," and would culminate in an end to segregation and
9 state-sanctioned discrimination;

10 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Washington State
11 Senate recognize the 150th anniversary of the passage of the
12 First Reconstruction Act, which passed over President Johnson's
13 veto on March 2, 1867.

14 I, Hunter G. Goodman, Secretary of the Senate,
15 do hereby certify that this is a true and
16 correct copy of Senate Resolution 8619,
17 adopted by the Senate
18 February 17, 2017

19 HUNTER G. GOODMAN
20 Secretary of the Senate