

SENATE RESOLUTION

8619

By Senators Nobles, Conway, Kuderer, Saldaña, Salomon, Short, Torres, and Wagoner

1 WHEREAS, Black History Month was established in February 1926 by
2 Carter G. Woodson as Negro History Week and was later expanded to
3 Afro-American History Month in 1976 in honor of the nation's
4 bicentennial; and

5 WHEREAS, It was Carter G. Woodson's hope that, through this
6 special observance, all Americans would be reminded of their own
7 roots and develop a mutual respect for the contributions of all
8 racial groups in America; and

9 WHEREAS, For more than 300 years as part of an established system
10 of slavery and human bondage, Black Americans toiled and survived,
11 and then overcame the degradation and shame of this system to become
12 contributors at every level of our public and private endeavors; and

13 WHEREAS, We honor the accomplishments and bravery of the first
14 Black Washingtonians who braved the treacherous journey along the
15 Oregon Trail to escape slave laws in the southern United States;
16 among them George Washington Bush, a free born slave, continued to
17 the territory north of the Columbia River that was free from the
18 Oregon laws that banned Black Americans from settling in the
19 territory south of the Columbia River; and

20 WHEREAS, George Washington Bush ended his journey in Tumwater to
21 establish a farm; his son William Owen Bush in 1889 became the first
22 Black American to serve in the Washington Territorial Legislature
23 representing Thurston County; William Owen Bush helped write the

1 first state law to establish the Washington State College in
2 Pullman, now Washington State University; and

3 WHEREAS, Representatives Charles Stokes and Marjorie Pitter
4 King were the first Black American man and woman to serve in the
5 legislature following the proclamation of Washington statehood;
6 and

7 WHEREAS, In the early 1900s, Jim Crow laws forced the first
8 wave migration of Black Americans to Washington state with the
9 majority of the population settling in the Central District
10 neighborhood of Seattle, which contains one of the most diverse
11 populations in the Pacific Northwest to the present day; and

12 WHEREAS, The second migration of 1940-1970 resulted in the
13 largest migration of Black Americans fleeing the south to the
14 Pacific Northwest for economic and social opportunities during
15 the rapid industrialization of the American West, with many
16 working for the war industries that led to the Allied Powers
17 victory in World War II; and

18 WHEREAS, After World War II, Black Americans continued to
19 struggle for upward class mobility such as decent housing, well-
20 paying jobs, and quality education; returning military service
21 members were denied their VA benefits once again after another
22 major world conflict; these benefits could have potentially
23 propelled millions of Black Americans out of poverty, but were
24 instead shut out during one of the greatest economic expansions
25 in United States history; and

26 WHEREAS, The desire to enjoy a life of freedom and liberty
27 caused Black Americans to defy racial hostility, Jim Crow laws,
28 and economic and social injustices; and

29 WHEREAS, That desire resulted in a decade of social and
30 political unrest that is known as the Civil Rights Movement,
31 whose tactics and rhetoric inspired countless other liberation
32 and rights movements for marginalized and impoverished
33 communities; and

34 WHEREAS, Resistance and struggle has inspired Black
35 Americans to succeed and the idea of a more perfect union has
36 left a positive legacy in American culture and society in
37 education, medicine, industry, the military, religion, social

1 sciences, philosophy, agriculture, engineering, and the arts;
2 and

3 WHEREAS, Black Americans continue to contribute widely to
4 the attainment of peace, equality, and justice, and all
5 Americans deserve to know of the great moments and
6 accomplishments of Black Americans; and

7 WHEREAS, Washington is a beautiful state, and America is a
8 proud nation due to our recognition of the contributions made by
9 many diverse populations and because of our ability to work
10 together as a state dependent upon international peace, harmony,
11 and cooperation;

12 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Washington State
13 Senate recognize and honor the African American citizens of this
14 great country and their innumerable contributions and support
15 the observance of the month of February as African American
16 history month.

17 I, Sarah Bannister, Secretary of the Senate,
18 do hereby certify that this is a true and
19 correct copy of Senate Resolution 8619,
20 adopted by the Senate
21 February 20, 2023

22 SARAH BANNISTER
23 Secretary of the Senate