

**Second Regular Session
Seventy-fifth General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO**

INTRODUCED

LLS NO. R26-0827.01 Nicole Denney x2297

SJR26-007

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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 26-007

101 **CONCERNING RECOGNIZING FEBRUARY OF 2026 AS BLACK HISTORY**
102 **MONTH.**

1 WHEREAS, Every February, the United States acknowledges and
2 honors that Americans of African descent, through their contributions and
3 sacrifices, have played an indelible role in shaping this country; and

4 WHEREAS, Even though race, and thus the designations of
5 "negro", "Black", "colored", and "African American", has been
6 recognized as a construct originally built to separate and disenfranchise
7 people based on skin color that was associated with people originating
8 from the African continent, there is a shared culture derived from that
9 history that should be seen and elevated; and

10 WHEREAS, In 1915, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, known as the

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.
Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing law.
Dashes through the words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law.

1 "father of Black history", first set out to designate a time to promote and
2 educate people about Black history and culture, as he believed that history
3 created by Black people, despite attempts to limit their potential, is a
4 critical part of American history; and

5 WHEREAS, Dr. Woodson founded the organization now known
6 as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History,
7 or ASALH, galvanizing fellow historians to envision a weeklong
8 celebration to encourage the coordinated teaching of Black history in
9 public schools because it was not woven into the fabric of the American
10 history taught year-round; and

11 WHEREAS, In 1926, Dr. Woodson was successful in creating
12 Negro History Week, a week celebrated during the second week of
13 February, as it coincided with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and
14 Frederick Douglass, both of whom ensured emancipation; and

15 WHEREAS, Dr. Woodson believed that Negro History Week
16 would not place limitations on but would focus and broaden the nation's
17 consciousness of the importance of learning Black history and make the
18 celebration of Black history in the academic field of history a serious area
19 of study; and

20 WHEREAS, By the late 1960s, due to demonstrations concerning
21 racial injustice, inequality, and poverty during the Civil Rights
22 Movement, Negro History Week evolved into what is now known as
23 Black History Month; and

24 WHEREAS, Calling upon Americans to "seize the opportunity to
25 honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in
26 every area of endeavor throughout our history", in 1976, President Gerald
27 R. Ford officially recognized Black History Month during the nation's
28 bicentennial; and

29 WHEREAS, The Association for the Study of African American
30 Life and History celebrates its 111th anniversary this year and 100th
31 anniversary of Negro History Week and consequently Black History
32 Month; the 2026 Black History Month theme is designated as "A Century
33 of Black History Commemorations"; and

34 WHEREAS, As part of the global African diaspora, people of
35 African descent in the United States have viewed their role in history as

1 critical to their own development and that of the world. Along with
2 writing Black histories, Black scholars started observing the milestones
3 in the struggle of people of African descent to gain their freedom and
4 equality. Revealing their connection to the diaspora, they commemorated
5 the Haitian Revolution, the end of the slave trade, and the end of slavery
6 in Jamaica. They observed American emancipation with Watch Night,
7 Jubilee Day, and Juneteenth celebrations, and noted the motivation of
8 Black people to dig up their own history and present it to the world: "The
9 American Negro must remake his past in order to make his future"; and

10 WHEREAS, In recognition of the contributions of notable
11 Coloradans of African descent who have shaped our state. Barney Ford
12 escaped slavery in Virginia and became a prominent restaurateur, barber,
13 and entrepreneur after arriving in Colorado in 1860. As a civil rights
14 advocate, he actively opposed statehood with suffrage denied to Black
15 men and some poor whites. The Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S.
16 Constitution (ratified in 1870) prohibited denying the vote based on race,
17 paving the way for renewed statehood efforts. President Ulysses S. Grant
18 signed Colorado into the Union on August 1, 1876, as the Centennial
19 State. Mr. Ford's actions were influential in guiding Colorado into entry
20 into our Union of States with a constitution that put "All Men" on equal
21 footing before the law, effectively helping guide it toward statehood
22 aligned with Reconstruction-era principles of equality. He continued his
23 civic work afterward, becoming the first Black man nominated to the
24 Colorado Territorial legislature, serving on a federal grand jury, and
25 advocating for education and anti-discrimination measures, earning his
26 place in history and as a beacon of light above this chamber; and

27 WHEREAS, Clara Brown, also born into slavery in Virginia
28 around 1800 and emancipated in Kentucky upon her enslaver's death in
29 1856 or 1859, journeyed westward during the Colorado Gold Rush as one
30 of the first African American women to settle in the region, becoming
31 known as "Aunt Clara" for her boundless generosity and humanitarian
32 spirit while building wealth through laundry services, boarding houses,
33 mining investments, and real estate in Central City and later Denver,
34 using her prosperity to provide shelter, aid, and support to newly freed
35 formerly enslaved people, orphans, and settlers in need, earning her the
36 enduring title "Angel of the Rockies" and recognition as Colorado's first
37 Black pioneer woman; and

38 WHEREAS, Representatives John T. Gunnell and Joseph H.
39 Stuart, Colorado's first and second Black state representatives, served

1 Arapahoe County from 1881 to 1883 and from 1895 to 1897,
2 respectively; Representative Gunnell sponsored House Bill 57 in 1881,
3 which concerned tenants-at-will, or monthly renters, and Representative
4 Stuart worked on a bill to ensure equal access to public places, regardless
5 of a person's race; and the recognition of their history and leadership lead
6 others to pursue legislative leadership in pursuit of creating a thriving and
7 inclusive state; and

8 WHEREAS, Knowledge and recognition of Colorado's early Black
9 civic leaders lead the generations to follow to serve as well. Ruben Lewis
10 Sims Jr. was the first African American firefighter for Aurora Fire
11 Rescue, serving from 1977 until 1997. A pioneer for racial minorities in
12 the department, he was a beloved engineer and firefighter. In October
13 2023, a portion of East 16th Avenue was renamed in his honor. Penfield
14 Tate II was the first black mayor of Boulder; he did not seek reelection
15 because they tried to recall him for supporting LGBTQ+ rights in the
16 1970s in Boulder; and

17 WHEREAS, Colorado celebrates Senator Regis Groff, the first
18 Black Colorado Senator; Gloria Tanner, the first Black woman senator;
19 Arie Taylor, the first Black woman representative; Terrance Carroll, the
20 first Black Speaker of the House; Peter Groff, the first Black President of
21 the Senate; Naquetta Ricks, the first African immigrant legislator; Junie
22 Joseph, the first Haitian immigrant legislator; Regina English, the first
23 Black woman legislator elected from El Paso County; and Senator James
24 Coleman, the presiding President of the Senate; and

25 WHEREAS, The recognition of Black History Month is not only
26 a call to stewardship of history but also a call to service and to develop
27 leadership. Over the past 100 years, the proliferation of organizations like
28 the National Pan-Hellenic Council, otherwise known as the Divine Nine,
29 the Urban League, and more recently, the My African American Miss
30 (Yes M.A.A.M.) scholarship pageant have trained and developed
31 generations of Black people to become community leaders, business
32 leaders, advocates, and so much more; and

33 WHEREAS, Many people have contributed to the inclusion of
34 Black history, culture, and perspective in our community development.
35 People like Fannie Mae Duncan of Colorado Springs, who is
36 memorialized because her courageous stand fostered the peaceful
37 integration of Colorado Springs. Ms. Duncan saying "Everybody
38 welcome" served as inspiration for leaders like Candice McKnight, the

1 founder of the African American Historical and Genealogical Society of
2 Colorado Springs, and June Waller, a National Organization of African
3 Americans in Housing legacy award recipient for over 50 years of work
4 in the field. Both espouse the values that knowing and remembering
5 history helps us not repeat history and that we as a society can forge
6 forward; and

7 WHEREAS, Colorado celebrates Edna Wilson-Mosley, a
8 prominent politician, civil rights activist, and educator in Denver and
9 Aurora, who was the first Black City Councilwoman to serve in Aurora,
10 the only Black founder of the Women's Bank of Denver, where she
11 served on the board of directors, and a civil rights specialist for the
12 Colorado Civil Rights Commission. She was also married to John
13 Mosley, a highly respected and original Tuskegee Airman; and

14 WHEREAS, Colorado celebrates Marie Greenwood, Denver's first
15 Black public school teacher, who forged a path for educators like Janet
16 Damon, a teacher at DELTA High School in Denver Public Schools, who
17 was awarded Colorado's 2025 Teacher of the Year for creating supportive
18 learning environments, advocating for students off-track for graduation,
19 and promoting literacy through initiatives like Afros and Books; and

20 WHEREAS, Black Americans have focused on examining three
21 particular eras of Black history to pursue enlightenment and true equality:
22 Looking to history and beliefs in values to be freed first from bondage;
23 then to be freed from overtly oppressive laws and policies designed to
24 separate and disenfranchise; and now, presently, to mitigate the impact of
25 such laws through examining and dismantling lingering systems; and to
26 this end, Black Coloradans continue to advocate for and pioneer equity
27 to achieve equality for all; now, therefore,

28 *Be It Resolved by the Senate of the Seventy-fifth General Assembly*
29 *of the State of Colorado, the House of Representatives concurring herein:*

30 (1) That the General Assembly recognizes the profound
31 contributions Americans of African descent have made to the
32 development of Colorado and the United States; and

33 (2) That the General Assembly recognizes February 2026 as the
34 100th Black History Month to:

35 ● Celebrate the rich cultural heritage, profound impact, and

- 1 enduring triumphs of Americans of African descent;
- 2 ● Honor the essential contributions of Americans of African
- 3 descent to the cultural tapestry of Colorado and the United
- 4 States; and
- 5 ● Affirm that we cannot learn valid lessons from false or
- 6 partial history, but must engage with the full truth of the
- 7 past, including both adversities and achievements.

8 *Be It Further Resolved*, That copies of this Joint Resolution be sent
9 to the presidents of the local National Pan-Hellenic Councils in Colorado,
10 History Colorado for use in the Racial Equity Study, Governor Jared
11 Polis, the members of Colorado's congressional delegation, President
12 Donald J. Trump, and Vice President J.D. Vance.