

Senate Resolution No. 24

Introduced by Senators Price and Wright

Relative to 2012 Black History Month

WHEREAS, Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson, 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, intended to encourage further research and publishing regarding the untold stories of African American heritage; and

WHEREAS, The history of African Americans here in the United States, as well as throughout the ages, is indeed unique and vibrant, and it is appropriate to celebrate this history during the month of February 2012, which has been proclaimed as Black History Month; and

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

WHEREAS, During the first millennium, the Catholic Church had three popes who were either from Africa or of African descent: Saint Victor I (189–99), Saint Miltiades (311–14), and Saint Gelasius I (492–96); and

WHEREAS, The slave trade was a tragic episode in African history and began before August 1619 when the first slaves arrived in Jamestown, Virginia. 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, The first American to shed blood in the revolution that freed America from British rule was Crispus Attucks (March 5, 1770, Boston Massacre), an African American seaman and slave. African Americans also fought in wars including the Battles of Lexington and Concord in April 1775, Ticonderoga, White Plains, Bennington,

Brandywine, Saratoga, Savannah, Yorktown, Bunker Hill, the Battle of Rhode Island on August 29, 1775, and other revolutionary war battles, the War of 1812, including, the Battle of New Orleans, the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, World Wars I and II, Korea, and Vietnam; and

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

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

WHEREAS, Although the institutions of slavery and racial segregation forced early African American culture to develop independently of mainstream American culture, today African American culture has become a significant part of this country's culture. African American culture has made prevalent contributions to American culture ranging from music, dance, clothing and hairstyle fashions, cuisine, and holiday observances; and

WHEREAS, African American art has made vital contributions to the art history of the United States. During the colonial era and the early 1800s, African American art took the form of small drums, quilts, wrought-iron figures, wood carvings, and ceramic vessels. Soon thereafter, the earliest African American portrait artists started to emerge, including G.W. Hobbs, William Simpson, Robert M. Douglas Jr., Patrick Henry Reason, Joshua Johnson, Robert S. Duncanson, and Scipio Moorhead; and

WHEREAS, In the post-Civil War period, African American artists received increased recognition as it became more acceptable to display African American art in museums and other art venues. Major artists of the era include Edward Mitchell Bannister, Henry Ossawa Tanner, and Edmonia Lewis; and

WHEREAS, The increased exposure of African American art ultimately resulted in the Harlem Renaissance during the 1920s, which was the first major public recognition of African American art and produced notable artists including, Richmond Barthe, Aaron Douglas, Lawrence Harris, Palmer Hayden, William H. Johnson, Sargent Johnson, John Biggers, Earle Wilton Richardson, Malvin Gray Johnson, Archibald Motley, Augusta Savage, Hale Woodruff, and James Van Der Zee. This

era also introduced African American authors and poets, including W.E.B. Du Bois, Booker T. Washington, Zora Neale Hurston, Nella Larsen, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, and Countee Cullen; and

WHEREAS, African American artists continued to influence art in this country during the Civil Rights era. Major artists of the era include Horace Pippin, Romare Bearden, Jacob Lawrence, William T. Williams, Norman Lewis, and Sam Gilliam who were all successfully received in galleries, and authors Richard Wright, James Baldwin, and Gwendolyn Brooks wrote about the African American experience; and

WHEREAS, African American art and culture have not only been incorporated and recognized in mainstream American art museums, but most major cities have opened museums dedicated specifically to African American art and artists. The National Endowment for the Arts is also providing increased support for African American artists; and

WHEREAS, Africans and African Americans have also been great inventors, inventing and improving things 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, A number of these brave and accomplished individuals, such as Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, Matthew A. Henson, Daniel Hale Williams, Dr. Charles Drew, Jackie Robinson, Jesse Owens, Curt Flood, Medgar Evers, and, of course, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., are noted prominently in the history books of students nationwide, thus enabling them to learn about the important and lasting contributions of these individuals; and

WHEREAS, Among those Americans who have enriched our society are the members of the African American community—individuals who have been steadfast in their commitment to promoting brotherhood, equality, and justice for all; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, That the Senate takes great pleasure in recognizing February 2012 as Black History Month, urges all residents to join in celebrating the accomplishments of African Americans during Black History Month, and encourages the people of California to recognize the many talents, achievements, and contributions that African Americans make to their communities; and be it further

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

Senate Resolution No. 24 read and adopted by the Senate February 9, 2012.

Attest: _____
Secretary of the Senate