



Legislation Text

File #: 46197, **Version:** 1

Fiscal Note

No appropriation required.

Title

Recognizing the significance of February 2017 as Black History Month.

Body

WHEREAS, the theme of Black History Month for 2017 is “The Crisis in Black Education”, which aims to further the dialogue on the critical role education plays in the advancement of the African-American community; and,

WHEREAS, the first Africans were brought involuntarily to the shores of the Americas as early as the 17th century; and,

WHEREAS, these Africans in America and their descendants are now known as African-Americans; and,

WHEREAS, African-Americans suffered enslavement and subsequently faced the injustices of lynch mobs, segregation, and denial of basic, fundamental rights; and,

WHEREAS, despite slavery, African-Americans in all walks of life have made significant contributions throughout the history of the United States, including through the-

- Writings of Booker T. Washington, Phyllis Wheatley, James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, Ralph Ellison,
- Zora Neale Hurston, and Alex Haley;
- Music of Mahalia Jackson, Billie Holiday, John Coltrane, Bessie Smith, Duke Ellington, BB King, and Louis Armstrong;
- Resolve of athletes such as Jackie Robinson, Althea Gibson, Jesse Owens, Wilma Rudolph, and Muhammad Ali;
- Scientific advancements of George Washington Carver, Charles Drew, Benjamin Banneker, and Mae Jemison;
- Vision of leaders such as Frederick Douglass, Mary McLeod Bethune, Thurgood Marshall, Martin Luther King, Jr., Shirley Chisholm and Barbara Jordan;
- Bravery of those who stood on the front lines in the battle against oppression, such as Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Fannie Lou Hammer, and Rosa Parks;
- Contributions of local Madison residents including, William H. Noland, first black mayoral candidate, Carson Gulley, UW-Madison’s famous chef and first black TV personality (with his wife, Beatrice), Helen McLean, the first black teacher in the Madison School District, Les Ritcherson, the first black assistant football coach for Wisconsin Badgers, Rev. James Wright, Madison’s first Equal Opportunities Commission Director, Eugene Parks, the first black elected to the Madison Common Council, Richard Williams, Madison’s first black police chief, Fabu, Madison’s first black poet laureate, Milele Chikasa Anana, publisher and owner of Umoja Magazine, the first African-American magazine highlighting positive news of African-Americans in Madison, and many others; and,

WHEREAS, in the face of injustices, many citizens of good will and of all races distinguished themselves with their commitment to the noble ideas upon which the United States was founded and courageously fought for the rights and freedom of African-Americans; and,

WHEREAS, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., lived and died to make real these noble ideas; and,

WHEREAS, Barack Hussein Obama was elected and reelected the 44th President of the United States, making him the first African-American chief executive and overcoming one of the last great racial challenges in politics in this country; and,

WHEREAS, the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass inspired the creation of Negro History Week, the precursor to Black History Month; and,

WHEREAS, Negro History Week represented the culmination of Dr. Carter G. Woodson's efforts to enhance knowledge of Black history started through the Journal of Negro History, published by Woodson's Association for the Study of African-American Life and History; and,

WHEREAS, the month of February is officially celebrated as Black History Month, which dates back to 1926 when Dr. Carter G. Woodson set aside a one week of time in February, which 50 years later extended to a month in order to recognize the heritage and achievement of Black Americans

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mayor and Madison Common Council recognize the significance of Black History Month as an important time to acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of African-Americans in the city of Madison and around the United States; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the city encourages the celebration of this month to provide an opportunity for all residents in the city to learn more about the past and to better understand the experiences that have shaped our nation, and,

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the city recognizes that ethnic and racial diversity of the United States enriches and strengthens our country and encourages the Madison Metropolitan School District to include in their educational curriculum the history and contributions of African-Americans in the United States and the city of Madison.