GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2013
RATIFIED BILL

RESOLUTION 2013-7
SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 133

A JOINT RESOLUTION HONORING THE LIFE AND MEMORY OF DR. JOY JOSEPH JOHNSON, FRED D. ALEXANDER, RICHARD C. ERWIN, JOHN W. WINTERS, SR., DR. ALFREDA JOHNSON WEBB, JEANNE HOPKINS LUCAS, AND OTHER PIONEER AFRICAN AMERICAN MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, IN OBSERVANCE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH.

Whereas, since 1976, February has been recognized as African American History Month across the United States; and

Whereas, African American History Month evolved from "Negro History Week," which was established in 1926 by Dr. Carter G. Woodson, a Harvard-educated African American author and scholar, who wanted to bring national attention to the contributions African Americans have made to this country; and

Whereas, African American History Month seeks to emphasize that African American History is American History; and

Whereas, African American History Month serves as a time to reflect upon past sacrifices and accomplishments of African Americans and to contemplate future goals, including correcting the disparities that exist between African Americans and other races; and

Whereas, the first African Americans began serving in the North Carolina General Assembly in 1868 and included: Senators Henry Eppes of Halifax County, Abraham H. Galloway of New Hanover County, and John Adams Hyman of Warren County, and Representatives Wilson Carey of Caswell County, William W. Cawthorne of Warren County, Henry C. Cherry of Edgecombe County, A. A. Crawford of Granville County, Richard Faulkner of Warren County, W. T. J. Hayes of Halifax County, Ivey Hudgins of Halifax County, John Sinclair Leary of Cumberland County, Cuffie Mayo of Granville County, Benjamin W. Morris of Craven County, George Washington Price, Jr. of New Hanover County, John Thomas Reynolds of Northampton County, Parker D. Robbins of Bertie County, A. W. Stevens of Craven County, Isham S. Sweat of Cumberland County, Thomas A. Sykes of Pasquotank County, and John Hendrick Williamson of Franklin County; and

Whereas, in 1883, one of the largest groups of African Americans since mid-Reconstruction served in the General Assembly, which included three senators and 16 representatives. These legislators were some of the most educated members serving at that time, some of whom had college educations and advanced degrees. They were elected in part as a result of the continued influence of African Americans in North Carolina's Republican Party, which for a period until the late 1800s had been predominantly African American; and

Whereas, from 1868 to 1900, no fewer than 111 African Americans were elected to the North Carolina General Assembly, but between 1900 through 1968, no African Americans were elected as a result of racial segregation enforced by "Jim Crow" laws and impediments to voting for African Americans such as the use of literacy tests and poll taxes; and

Whereas, with the passage of and enforcement of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, African Americans were again elected to the General Assembly, beginning with the 1968 election of Henry E. Frye of Guilford County to the House of Representatives; and

Whereas, by 1975, six African Americans were serving in the General Assembly, including Senators Fred D. Alexander of Mecklenburg County and John W. Winters, Sr. of Wake County, and Representatives Richard C. Erwin of Forsyth County, Henry E. Frye of Guilford County, Dr. Joy Joseph Johnson of Robeson County, and H. M. "Mickey" Michaux, Jr. of Durham County; and

Whereas, Dr. Alfreda Johnson Webb of Guilford County was the first African American female appointed to the House of Representatives to fill an unexpired term in 1971 but never actively served in the General Assembly; and

Whereas, the first African American women to actively serve in the General Assembly were Annie Brown Kennedy of Forsyth County, who was appointed to the House of Representatives to fill an unexpired term in 1979, and Jeanne Hopkins Lucas of Durham County, who was appointed to the Senate to fill an unexpired term in 1993; and

Whereas, Pearl Burris-Floyd of Gaston County was elected as the first African American female Republican to the General Assembly, serving in the House of Representatives in 2009; and

Whereas, Daniel Blue, Jr. of Wake County was elected by his peers as the first African American Speaker of the House of Representatives in 1991, William L. Wainwright of Craven County was elected by his peers as the first African American Speaker Pro Tempore of the House of Representatives in 2007, Milton "Toby" Fitch, Jr. of Wilson County was chosen by his peers as the first African American Majority Leader, and Larry D. Hall of Durham County was chosen by his peers as the first African American Democratic Minority Leader in 2013; and

Whereas, it appears from historical records that Israel Abbott of Craven County was chosen as assistant doorkeeper of the House of Representatives in 1868, suggesting that African Americans served on the Sergeant-at-Arms staff as early as 1868; and

Whereas, Ms. Clay Knight was the first African American to serve on the General Assembly's professional staff, working as an attorney in the Research Division beginning in 1974; and

Whereas, in 1982, African American legislators formed the North Carolina Legislative Black Caucus (NCLBC) as an unincorporated association of Senators and Representatives of African American heritage and other lawmakers of color to promote legislative policies and actions responsive to the needs of all North Carolinians, particularly African Americans, people of color, and other groups who face systemic disparities and mistreatment; and

Whereas, the NCLBC initially focused on issues such as redistricting; fair appropriations for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), including capital funds; and funding for minority economic development; and

Whereas, 27 years ago, the NCLBC established the North Carolina Black Caucus Foundation (501)(c)(3), which has provided over $1 million in scholarships to talented students attending the 10 HBCUs in North Carolina, enabling them to successfully complete their degrees, and which has sponsored a signature annual statewide conference that empowers our communities across the State to address important public policy issues; and

Whereas, the 2013 NCLBC includes nine Senators and 24 House members representing 31 African Americans and two Native Americans; and

Whereas, it is especially fitting to honor the lives and memories of those African American legislators who were the pioneers in the African American history of the State's General Assembly and on whose shoulders, strengths, and contributions the current members stand; Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the Senate, the House of Representatives concurring:

SECTION 1. The General Assembly honors all of the African American pioneers serving in the General Assembly since Reconstruction and expresses its appreciation for their efforts to overcome racial segregation and exclusion and other pernicious disparities and for their struggles and work to ensure our country's founding principles of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are attainable for everyone.

SECTION 2. The General Assembly urges citizens of this State to participate in ceremonies and events to commemorate and honor African Americans for their invaluable contributions to our State and nation and to learn more about the significant roles African Americans have had in the building of our State and country not only during African American History Month but throughout the year.

SECTION 3. This resolution is effective upon ratification.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 4th day of March, 2013.

s/ Daniel J. Forest
President of the Senate

s/ Thom Tillis
Speaker of the House of Representatives