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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

HOUSE RESOLUTION

PROCLAIMING FEBRUARY OF 2026, AS "BLACK HISTORY MONTH" IN THE STATE  
OF RHODE ISLAND

Introduced By: Representatives Hull, Stewart, Alzate, Felix, Batista, Morales,  
Chippendale, Giraldo, Shekarchi, and Blazejewski  
Date Introduced: February 03, 2026

Referred To: House read and passed

1           WHEREAS, Throughout the history of the United States of America, truly significant  
2 African American contributions to the economy, social growth, sciences, and arts in this great  
3 nation have all too often been ignored. In recognition of this plethora of major accomplishments  
4 made by men and women of African ancestry, the month of February is celebrated as "Black  
5 History Month" across the nation; and

6           WHEREAS, It is vital to understand that every day of every month of every year in the  
7 history of our country, significant and historical contributions have been made by African  
8 Americans; and

9           WHEREAS, African Americans were first brought to America forcibly. They were  
10 enslaved, faced inhuman cruelty, and were subjected to injustices beyond understanding. Families  
11 were torn apart, lynching went unpunished, and segregation and denial of fundamental  
12 constitutional rights and protections went on for decades; and

13           WHEREAS, Though these men and women suffered immense tragedies and social  
14 inequalities, they also persevered, and their triumphs and contributions to the economic, artistic,  
15 literary, scientific, and technological advancement of our country are significant and momentous;  
16 and

17           WHEREAS, African Americans have been an integral part of Rhode Island's social,  
18 political, and economic development from its beginning as a British colony, to its inclusion in the  
19 formation of the United States, to the rich diversity of today's Ocean State; and

1           WHEREAS, From the initial shots fired in the struggle for American Independence, to  
2 the participation of the Rhode Island 1<sup>st</sup> Black Regiment in the Battle of Newport, to the garrisons  
3 of the Rhode Island 14<sup>th</sup> Heavy Artillery Regiment (Colored) in 1863, Americans of African  
4 descent have responded to the call of duty; and

5           WHEREAS, In recognition of the numerous positive and patriotic contributions of  
6 African American Rhode Islanders in the United States military, we honor their legacy of  
7 bravery, honor, and sacrifice. From the earliest recordation of Black History in our state,  
8 including those of slaves, former slaves, and free men, African Americans have served with pride  
9 to protect our vital interests and provide for our common defense; and

10          WHEREAS, Structures in the City of Newport, such as the Brick Market, later used as  
11 the town hall and theater; the Old Colony House, which at one time served Rhode Island as its  
12 capitol; and the oldest library in America, the Redwood Library, stand as lasting and beautiful  
13 tributes to the African Americans who lived in our state and played a major role in the  
14 construction of these magnificent historic structures; and

15          WHEREAS, Many African Americans have made enormous and significant contributions  
16 to our nation, from Dr. Martin Luther King, whose eloquent and courageous actions on behalf of  
17 freedom and liberty for all earned him the Nobel Peace Prize and started our nation on the long  
18 and all-too-slow path towards equality for all, and President Barack Obama our nation's first  
19 African American President, who continued and expanded upon Dr. King's vision through his  
20 support for expanding healthcare access for everyone, diversified the federal bureaucracy,  
21 strengthened women's right to fair pay, and protected LGBTQ+ citizens from employment  
22 discrimination; and

23          WHEREAS, Other African Americans who have contributed much to our nation's  
24 vibrancy and success include Maya Angelou, the noted poet, civil rights activist, and recipient of  
25 the Spingarn Medal from the NAACP and the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President  
26 Barack Obama, famed novelist James Baldwin, famous inventor George Washington Carver,  
27 Civil Rights activist and educator Mary McLeod Bethune, Congresswoman Shirley Chisolm, the  
28 first African American to run for President of the United States, noted author and abolitionist  
29 Frederick Douglass, Doctor Charles Drew, whose research and work on plasma literally saved  
30 millions of lives, famous sociologist, writer and activist W.E.B. Du Bois, noted jazz composer  
31 and bandleader Duke Ellington, Civil Rights activist Jesse Jackson, film director Spike Lee,  
32 famed actors Sidney Poitier and Denzel Washington, the great Hall of Fame baseball player  
33 Jackie Robinson, who courageously faced down death threats to integrate Major League Baseball,  
34 famous boxers and American heroes Joe Louis and Muhammed Ali, Supreme Court Justices

1 Thurgood Marshall, who, as a lawyer, won the famous Brown v. Board of Education public  
2 school desegregation case before the United States Supreme Court, and Ketanji Brown Jackson,  
3 the first African American woman to be appointed to the Supreme Court, photographer Gordon  
4 Parks, Olympic heroes Jesse Owens and Rafer Johnson, Abolition activists Sojourner Truth and  
5 Harriet Tubman, and noted educator, Civil Rights activist Booker T. Washington, golf legend  
6 Tiger Woods, tennis superstars Serena and Venus Williams and numerous other African  
7 Americans; and

8 WHEREAS, The United States and particularly the State of Rhode Island owe a debt of  
9 gratitude to our African American citizens and their forefathers, whose documented achievements  
10 have too long gone unrecognized; and

11 WHEREAS, The 2026 Black History month theme is "A Century of Black History  
12 Commemorations", marks the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Black History Month's formal establishment,  
13 and focusses "on the history and impact of these celebrations in transforming Black lives and  
14 culture"; now, therefore be it

15 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island hereby  
16 proudly proclaims February of 2026 as "Black History Month", and furthermore recognizes and  
17 applauds the sacrifices and myriad contributions made by African American men and women  
18 throughout this great nation's history; and be it further

19 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to  
20 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society.

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