

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2013

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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 133

Sponsors: Senators D. Davis, Nesbitt (Primary Sponsors); Bryant, Clodfelter, Daniel, Goolsby, Graham, Hise, Kinnaid, Pate, Randleman, Robinson, Walters, and Woodard.

Referred to: Rules and Operations of the Senate.

February 26, 2013

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

34 Whereas, from 1868 to 1900, no fewer than 111 African Americans were elected to
35 the North Carolina General Assembly, but between 1900 through 1968, no African Americans



1 were elected as a result of racial segregation enforced by "Jim Crow" laws and impediments to
2 voting for African Americans such as the use of literacy tests and poll taxes; and

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

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

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

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

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

21 Whereas, Daniel Blue, Jr. of Wake County was elected by his peers as the first
22 African American Speaker of the House of Representatives in 1991, William L. Wainwright of
23 Craven County was elected by his peers as the first African American Speaker Pro Tempore of
24 the House of Representatives in 2007, Milton "Toby" Fitch, Jr. of Wilson County was chosen
25 by his peers as the first African American Majority Leader, and Larry D. Hall of Durham
26 County was chosen by his peers as the first African American Democratic Minority Leader in
27 2013; and

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

31 Whereas, Ms. Clay Knight was the first African American to serve on the General
32 Assembly's professional staff, working as an attorney in the Research Division beginning in
33 1974; and

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

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

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

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

50 Whereas, it is especially fitting to honor the lives and memories of those African
51 American legislators who were the pioneers in the African American history of the State's

1 General Assembly and on whose shoulders, strengths, and contributions the current members
2 stand; Now, therefore,

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

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

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

14 **SECTION 3.** This resolution is effective upon ratification.