

1 State of Arkansas
2 93rd General Assembly
3 Regular Session, 2021

SCR 6

4
5 By: Senators D. Sullivan, G. Stubblefield
6 By: Representative Bentley

7
8 **SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION**
9 TO COMMEMORATE AMERICAN HISTORY.

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11
12 **Subtitle**
13 TO COMMEMORATE AMERICAN HISTORY.

14
15
16 WHEREAS, the accomplishments of African-Americans throughout America's
17 history have been abundant, significant, and far-reaching, helping shape
18 America into the exceptional nation of unprecedented opportunity and
19 achievement it has become over the centuries; and

20
21 WHEREAS, the countless contributions by African-Americans have been
22 varied and diverse as well as indispensable and inspiring, influencing areas
23 such as politics, religion, military, education, science, research, business,
24 entrepreneurship, and other realms; and

25
26 WHEREAS, many important and indisputable facts from American history
27 have been underemphasized and overlooked but are worth presenting; and

28
29 WHEREAS, the first African slaves were originally brought to North
30 America unwillingly, having been conquered, captured, and sold by other
31 African tribes and slave traders to the Dutch and other traders journeying to
32 America; and

33
34 WHEREAS, the first African slaves in North America were brought by the
35 Spanish to their colonies in the Florida region in 1565; and

36



1 WHEREAS, the first African slaves in a North American English colony
2 arrived in Virginia in 1619 but became indentured servants instead of
3 remaining slaves, earning their freedom, with the state giving them their own
4 land after a set number of years; and

5
6 WHEREAS, the first documented occasion of legalized chattel slavery in
7 the English colonies of America did not occur until 1654 in Virginia, when
8 free African-American Anthony Johnson sued in court and won the right to own
9 another African-American for life; and

10
11 WHEREAS, a slave ship arrived in 1646 in Massachusetts, whereupon the
12 slaves were freed and the slave owners imprisoned and charged with the
13 capital crime of man stealing; and

14
15 WHEREAS, the two (2) English colonies of Virginia and Massachusetts
16 began a dual track for African-Americans, with much slavery and oppression in
17 the South and much freedom and opportunity in the North; and

18
19 WHEREAS, African-Americans contributed much to America's rich colonial
20 history, including political officials such as Mathias de Sousa, elected to
21 office in 1642; Wentworth Cheswell, elected to office in 1768 and reelected
22 for the next forty-nine (49) years to eight (8) different political offices;
23 and Thomas Hercules, elected to office in 1793; and

24
25 WHEREAS, one (1) of the first casualties of the movement for American
26 independence was Black Patriot Crispus Attucks, who was shot by British
27 soldiers during the Boston Massacre; and

28
29 WHEREAS, notable African-American soldiers in the American Revolution
30 included James Armistead Lafayette, Jack Sisson, Prince Whipple, Peter Salem,
31 Salem Poor, Lemuel Haynes, Richard Allen, Prince Estabrook, Jordan Freeman,
32 Oliver Cromwell, Brister Baker, and numerous others; and

33
34 WHEREAS, during the American Revolution, African-Americans and whites
35 served together in integrated units in virtually every battle, and African-
36 Americans routinely reenlisted, voluntarily serving an average of eight (8)

1 times longer than white soldiers; and

2
3 WHEREAS, influential African-American colonial clergymen included
4 Richard Allen, founder of America's first African-American Christian
5 denomination; Absalom Jones, the first African-American clergyman to be
6 ordained into a major Christian denomination; Lemuel Haynes, the first
7 African-American to receive a degree of higher education and to have a sermon
8 published, pastoring multiple white churches; and Harry Hoosier, credited by
9 some historians as being the namesake of "The Hoosier State" of Indiana; and

10
11 WHEREAS, African-Americans also contributed much to America's rich
12 history well beyond the colonial era and the founding of America; and

13
14 WHEREAS, throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there were
15 many distinguished African-American entrepreneurs and business leaders,
16 including Paul Cuffe, Stephen Smith, Clara Brown, Robert Gordon, Bridget
17 Mason, Charles Richard Patterson, and many others; and

18
19 WHEREAS, notable nineteenth century African-American soldiers included
20 Robert Smalls, the first African-American United States naval captain and
21 Major General in the South Carolina militia; and William Harvey Carney,
22 Christian Fleetwood, Alfred Hilton, Charles Veale, and Alexander Kelly, five
23 (5) of the eight (8) African-Americans who received the medal of honor for
24 protecting the American flag, with many others receiving that medal for other
25 acts of courage; and

26
27 WHEREAS, in the nineteenth century, influential African-Americans
28 included federal political leaders such as Hiram Rhodes Revels, the first
29 African-American United States senator; Blanche Kelso Bruce, the second
30 African-American United States senator and the first African-American man to
31 be nominated for Vice President and to have his name printed on federal
32 currency; Joseph Hayne Rainey, the first African-American person to preside
33 over the United States House of Representatives; many other African-Americans
34 at the federal level; and hundreds more African-Americans at the state
35 legislative level; and

36

1 WHEREAS, distinguished African-American ministers and civil rights
2 advocates should be honored by all Americans, including Frederick Douglass,
3 Henry Highland Garnet, Booker T. Washington, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth,
4 and Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr; and

5
6 WHEREAS, many critics today wrongly assert that the United States
7 Constitution was a proslavery document, pointing to the three-fifths clause
8 and claiming that the United States Constitution says that African-Americans
9 are only three-fifths of a person; and

10
11 WHEREAS, famous African-American clergyman and abolitionist Frederick
12 Douglass had been told this and initially accepted that the United States
13 Constitution was a proslavery document until he personally read it for
14 himself as well as the writings of those who wrote it; and

15
16 WHEREAS, after that personal examination, Mr. Douglass concluded that
17 the United States Constitution was an antislavery document and declared, “I
18 defy the presentation of a single proslavery clause in it” and that to the
19 contrary, “it will be found to contain principles and purposes, entirely
20 hostile to the existence of slavery”; and

21
22 WHEREAS, too many today overlook or ignore America’s ongoing positive
23 record on race and slavery; and

24
25 WHEREAS, by 1804, every northern state in the nation had passed laws
26 for the abolition of slavery, making it one (1) of the earliest regions in
27 the world to do so; and

28
29 WHEREAS, of the scores of nations in the world in the late eighteenth
30 and early nineteenth centuries, in 1807 America became one (1) of the first
31 nations in the world to sign a law banning the slave trade, with Great
32 Britain doing so shortly thereafter; and while the British law went into
33 effect two (2) months before America’s did, it contained major loopholes,
34 causing America to be the first nation in the world with an immediate ban on
35 the slave trade; and

36

1 WHEREAS, beginning in 1819, America dispatched and maintained a naval
2 presence off the coast of Africa to prevent other nations from taking slaves
3 out of Africa, and American naval vessels intercepted and turned back
4 numerous ships from other countries, continuing this effort until the
5 outbreak of the Civil War, when those ships were called home in 1861 to fight
6 the southern slave-holding Confederacy; and

7
8 WHEREAS, America was not a major world leader in the African slave
9 trade; and of the twelve million five hundred thousand (12,500,000) Africans
10 brutally removed from Africa and sold into slavery from 1501 until 1875,
11 approximately five million eight hundred thousand (5,800,000) were made
12 slaves in Portuguese holdings; three million three hundred thousand
13 (3,300,000) in English holdings; one million four hundred thousand
14 (1,400,000) in French holdings; one million one hundred thousand (1,100,000)
15 in Spanish holdings; six hundred thousand (600,000) in Dutch holdings; and
16 three hundred thousand (300,000) brought to the United States; and

17
18 WHEREAS, of the nearly two hundred (200) nations in the world today,
19 ninety-four (94) still have not criminalized slavery or the slave trade, and
20 there are currently forty million (40,000,000) slaves in the world, including
21 individuals forced into labor and into marriage; and

22
23 WHEREAS, America is currently one (1) of the top nations in the world
24 in fighting slavery, the slave trade, and human trafficking; and

25
26 WHEREAS, despite America's early progress and work in advancing the
27 issue of securing racial freedom and equality, that issue regrettably became
28 more political and polarized; and

29
30 WHEREAS, for example, a 1789 law that prohibited slavery in the federal
31 territories was reversed in 1820 when Congress passed the Missouri
32 Compromise; and

33
34 WHEREAS, in 1850 Congress passed the reprehensible Fugitive Slave Act
35 of 1850, codifying and denying even minimal constitutional protections to
36 accused slaves and allowing slave hunters to take African-Americans from the

1 North to slavery in the South; and

2
3 WHEREAS, in 1854 Congress passed the Kansas Nebraska Act, legally
4 allowing the extension of slavery all the way north to Canada through many
5 formerly antislavery territories; and

6
7 WHEREAS, in May of 1854, following the passage of these proslavery laws
8 in Congress, a number of antislavery members of Congress joined with
9 antislavery members of Congress from the Whig, Free Soil, and emancipationist
10 parties; and

11
12 WHEREAS, in 1856 Republicans issued their first national platform,
13 affirming its call not only for the end of slavery but also for equality and
14 civil rights; and

15
16 WHEREAS, in 1857 the United States Supreme Court delivered the
17 reprehensible Dred Scott decision, declaring that African-Americans were not
18 persons but instead were property and therefore had no rights, and that
19 Congress could not ban slavery anywhere; and

20
21 WHEREAS, in 1860 the Democratic Party Platform supported slavery and
22 distributed a copy of the Dred Scott decision along with their platform to
23 show they abided by the Court's disgraceful decision; and

24
25 WHEREAS, in the 1860 presidential election, antislavery candidate
26 Abraham Lincoln represented the Republican Party, and the rest of the vote
27 was split between three (3) proslavery candidates, Stephen Douglas of
28 Illinois, John Breckenridge of Kentucky, and John Bell of Tennessee, with
29 Lincoln receiving thirty-nine (39%) of the national popular vote but sixty
30 percent (60%) of the electoral votes, and the Democrats receiving sixty-one
31 (61%) of the popular vote and forty percent (40%) of the electoral votes,
32 meaning that Abraham Lincoln became president; and

33
34 WHEREAS, Republicans not only won the presidency but also gained
35 control of the United States House of Representatives and Senate after the
36 majority of Democrats resigned and seceded, whereupon Congress began passing

1 antislavery and civil rights laws; and

2
3 WHEREAS, in 1865 when the 13th Amendment was passed to abolish slavery,
4 twenty-one percent (21%) of Democrats in Congress voted to end slavery; and

5
6 WHEREAS, on the same day that Congress abolished slavery, Senator
7 Charles Sumner took African-American attorney, teacher, dentist, and
8 physician John Rock to the United States Supreme Court, where he became the
9 first African-American to be admitted to the United States Supreme Court bar;
10 and

11
12 WHEREAS, after the passage of the 13th Amendment, Congress asked
13 African-American pastor the Reverend Henry Highland Garnet, a former slave,
14 to preach a sermon to commemorate the end of slavery at the church service
15 held every Sunday in the Hall of the House of Representatives inside the
16 United States Capitol; and

17
18 WHEREAS, the Reverend Garnet preached his powerful sermon on Sunday,
19 February 12, 1865, saying, "What is slavery? Too well do I know what it is
20 ... I was born among the cherished institutions of slavery. My earliest
21 recollections of parents, friends, and the home of my childhood are clouded
22 with its wrongs. The first sight that met my eyes was my Christian mother
23 enslaved."; and

24
25 WHEREAS, by giving this sermon, Reverend Garnet became the first
26 African-American officially to speak in the halls of Congress; and

27
28 WHEREAS, the 14th Amendment securing civil rights for African-Americans
29 was passed without a single Democrat vote of support, and the 15th Amendment
30 securing voting rights was then passed; and

31
32 WHEREAS, when African-Americans in southern states received civil
33 rights, including the right to vote, they promptly elected state Republican
34 legislatures across the South, which moved quickly to protect voting rights
35 for African-Americans, prohibit segregation, and open public education,
36 public transportation, state police, schools, and other institutions to

1 African-Americans; and

2
3 WHEREAS, African-Americans became active legislators in the South, with
4 the first forty (42) African-Americans elected to the state legislature in
5 Texas as Republicans, along with the first one hundred twenty-seven (127)
6 African-American legislators in Louisiana; the first one hundred and three
7 (103) in Alabama; the first one hundred twelve (112) in Mississippi; the
8 first one hundred ninety (190) in South Carolina; the first forty-six (46) in
9 Virginia; the first thirty (30) in Florida; the first thirty (30) in North
10 Carolina; and the first forty-one (41) in Georgia; and

11
12 WHEREAS, the first twenty-three (23) African-American legislators
13 elected to the United States Congress were largely from southern states where
14 thirteen (13) of them had been slaves; and

15
16 WHEREAS, in 1866, white southerners began to retaliate against African-
17 American advancement in the southern states not only by the manipulation of
18 election laws in the South but also by physical violence, as in Louisiana
19 where forty (40) African-American and twenty (20) white individuals were
20 killed, with one hundred fifty (150) more wounded at the Republican Party
21 convention; and

22
23 WHEREAS, also in 1866, Democrats openly acknowledged in congressional
24 hearings that they formed the Ku Klux Klan as a political affiliate to help
25 regain Democrat control in elections; and

26
27 WHEREAS, the national leader and Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan was
28 former Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest, who was an honored member
29 of the Democrat National Convention of 1868; and

30
31 WHEREAS, the Ku Klux Klan's reign of violence targeted and lynched many
32 African-Americans but also white individuals, with three thousand four
33 hundred forty-six (3,446) African-Americans and one thousand two hundred
34 ninety-seven (1,297) whites lynched between 1882 and 1968; and

35
36 WHEREAS, by 1875, Congress had successfully passed almost twenty-four

1 (24) civil rights laws to secure equality and full civil rights; and

2
3 WHEREAS, in 1876 Democrats regained control of the United States House
4 of Representatives, blocked further civil rights progress, and began
5 repealing existing civil rights laws so that it would be another eighty-nine
6 (89) years before the next federal civil rights law was passed; and

7
8 WHEREAS, Congress had opposed equal education for all students, with
9 eighty-seven percent (87%) of congressional Democrats voting against the 1872
10 civil rights education bill, while at the same time schools and churches in
11 which African-American children were being taught were being burned,
12 resulting in segregated, inferior, and dilapidated schools for blacks
13 becoming the norm in the southern states; and

14
15 WHEREAS, in 1919, one (1) of the bloodiest racial confrontations in the
16 history of the country occurred with the Elaine Massacre in Elaine, Arkansas,
17 in which hundreds of African-Americans and five (5) white individuals are
18 estimated to have been killed following a meeting of courageous African-
19 Americans who were taking a bold stand for equal opportunity, individual
20 liberty, and the right to make a living for themselves and their families;
21 and

22
23 WHEREAS, in the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision, the United
24 States Supreme Court finally struck down mandatory state segregation laws in
25 education, thus reinstating the anti-segregation standard that Congress had
26 passed nearly seventy-five (75) years earlier in the Civil Rights Act of
27 1875, which had been strongly opposed by Democrats at the time; and

28
29 WHEREAS, ninety-nine (99) Democrats and two (2) Republicans in the
30 United States Congress, nineteen (19) Senators and eighty-two (82)
31 Representatives, signed the "Southern Manifesto" denouncing the Court's 1954
32 decision to end segregation; and

33
34 WHEREAS, although under President Franklin Roosevelt the 1944
35 Democratic Party Platform for the first time called for an end to racial
36 discrimination, Congress still killed every piece of civil rights legislation

1 introduced in that era; and

2
3 WHEREAS, when President Harry S. Truman introduced an aggressive ten-
4 point civil rights legislative package that included an anti-lynching law, a
5 ban on the poll tax, and desegregation of the military, Congress killed all
6 of his proposals, including his proposed Civil Rights Commission; and

7
8 WHEREAS, President Dwight D. Eisenhower issued executive orders to
9 eliminate racial discrimination and segregation in the District of Columbia
10 and among federal contractors, and became the first president to appoint an
11 African-American, E. Frederic Morrow, to an executive position on the White
12 House staff; and

13
14 WHEREAS, in 1957 President Eisenhower proposed a bold civil rights bill
15 to increase African-American voting rights and protections, but it was
16 weakened by Senator James Eastland, who is credited with killing every civil
17 rights bill that came before his committee in the 1950s; and

18
19 WHEREAS, in 1960 President John F. Kennedy refused to sign an executive
20 order to integrate public housing until the violent racial discord in
21 Birmingham in 1963 caused him to change his mind, after which he began
22 promoting the civil rights bill; and

23
24 WHEREAS, when President Lyndon Johnson promoted the Civil Rights Act of
25 1964, which, like President Kennedy, he had earlier voted against while
26 serving in the United States Senate, it was halted by Senators Robert Byrd
27 and Richard Russell until Senator Everett Dirksen and Congress were able to
28 move the measure forward, allowing the Civil Rights Act of 1964, followed by
29 the Voting Rights Act of 1965, to be signed into law; and

30
31 WHEREAS, Democrats had it completely within their power to pass those
32 landmark civil rights bills but did not, and Republicans overwhelmingly
33 supported the Civil Rights Act of 1964, with eighty percent (80%) of
34 Republicans voting for that bill, a percentage of support almost twenty (20)
35 percentage points higher than that of the Democrats; and

36

1 WHEREAS, the most recognizable civil rights leader of that era was the
2 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a Christian minister who was with
3 President Johnson when the famous civil rights bill was signed into law; and
4

5 WHEREAS, the contributions of not only these noted African-Americans
6 but also of countless others in these and many other facets of American life
7 and culture should be recognized and honored; and
8

9 WHEREAS, the story of African-American heroes over the past three
10 hundred and fifty (350) years needs desperately to be told and known by all
11 Americans today but is often ignored or rewritten; and
12

13 WHEREAS, these heroes are not just African-American heroes but are
14 American heroes and should be honored by all Americans, regardless of race or
15 ethnicity; and
16

17 WHEREAS, Arkansas is committed to preserving historical literacy and
18 honoring the names and lives of those who have contributed so much to America
19 becoming the remarkable nation it is among the nations of the world,
20

21 NOW THEREFORE,

22 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE
23 STATE OF ARKANSAS, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN:
24

25 THAT the Senate urge each citizen to become familiar with the names in
26 this resolution and investigate and learn about their extraordinary
27 achievements; celebrate the contributions of all Americans, especially those
28 of African-Americans during Black History Month; and are grateful and
29 thankful for their contributions across previous generations, which made
30 America the exceptional nation it is today.
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