SENATE RESOLUTION

8619

By Senators Nobles, Conway, Kuderer, Saldaña, Salomon, Short, Torres, and Wagoner

WHEREAS, Black History Month was established in February 1926 by Carter G. Woodson as Negro History Week and was later expanded to Afro-American History Month in 1976 in honor of the nation's bicentennial; and

WHEREAS, It was Carter G. Woodson's hope that, through this special observance, all Americans would be reminded of their own roots and develop a mutual respect for the contributions of all racial groups in America; and

WHEREAS, For more than 300 years as part of an established system of slavery and human bondage, Black Americans toiled and survived, and then overcame the degradation and shame of this system to become contributors at every level of our public and private endeavors; and

WHEREAS, We honor the accomplishments and bravery of the first Black Washingtonians who braved the treacherous journey along the Oregon Trail to escape slave laws in the southern United States; among them George Washington Bush, a free born slave, continued to the territory north of the Columbia River that was free from the Oregon laws that banned Black Americans from settling in the territory south of the Columbia River; and

WHEREAS, George Washington Bush ended his journey in Tumwater to establish a farm; his son William Owen Bush in 1889 became the first Black American to serve in the Washington Territorial Legislature representing Thurston County; William Owen Bush helped write the first state law to establish the Washington State College in Pullman, now Washington State University; and

WHEREAS, Representatives Charles Stokes and Marjorie Pitter King were the first Black American man and woman to serve in the legislature following the proclamation of Washington statehood; and

WHEREAS, In the early 1900s, Jim Crow laws forced the first wave migration of Black Americans to Washington state with the majority of the population settling in the Central District neighborhood of Seattle, which contains one of the most diverse populations in the Pacific Northwest to the present day; and

WHEREAS, The second migration of 1940-1970 resulted in the largest migration of Black Americans fleeing the south to the Pacific Northwest for economic and social opportunities during the rapid industrialization of the American West, with many working for the war industries that led to the Allied Powers victory in World War II; and

WHEREAS, After World War II, Black Americans continued to struggle for upward class mobility such as decent housing, well-paying jobs, and quality education; returning military service members were denied their VA benefits once again after another major world conflict; these benefits could have potentially propelled millions of Black Americans out of poverty, but were instead shut out during one of the greatest economic expansions in United States history; and

WHEREAS, The desire to enjoy a life of freedom and liberty caused Black Americans to defy racial hostility, Jim Crow laws, and economic and social injustices; and

WHEREAS, That desire resulted in a decade of social and political unrest that is known as the Civil Rights Movement, whose tactics and rhetoric inspired countless other liberation and rights movements for marginalized and impoverished communities; and

WHEREAS, Resistance and struggle has inspired Black Americans to succeed and the idea of a more perfect union has left a positive legacy in American culture and society in education, medicine, industry, the military, religion, social sciences, philosophy, agriculture, engineering, and the arts; and

WHEREAS, Black Americans continue to contribute widely to the attainment of peace, equality, and justice, and all Americans deserve to know of the great moments and accomplishments of Black Americans; and

WHEREAS, Washington is a beautiful state, and America is a proud nation due to our recognition of the contributions made by many diverse populations and because of our ability to work together as a state dependent upon international peace, harmony, and cooperation;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Washington State Senate recognize and honor the African American citizens of this great country and their innumerable contributions and support the observance of the month of February as African American history month.

I, Sarah Bannister, Secretary of the Senate,

do hereby certify that this is a true and

correct copy of Senate Resolution 8619,

adopted by the Senate

February 20, 2023

SARAH BANNISTER

Secretary of the Senate