

By: Giddings

H.R. No. 401

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, The celebration of Black History Month in February
2 2017 provides a welcome opportunity to recognize the rich cultural
3 heritage and significant contributions of African Americans in
4 Texas; and

5 WHEREAS, A weeklong observance focusing on black history was
6 established in 1926 by Dr. Carter G. Woodson, an author and scholar
7 and the son of former slaves, who sought a means of educating
8 non-black Americans about African American culture and of
9 engendering pride among black Americans; the tribute was expanded
10 to a month in 1976 and was officially recognized by President Gerald
11 Ford, who encouraged all Americans to celebrate "Black History
12 Month and the message of courage and perseverance it brings to all
13 of us"; and

14 WHEREAS, People of African descent have a long history in the
15 Lone Star State; in 1528, less than 10 years after explorers claimed
16 Texas in the name of King Charles I, a Moor named Estevanico
17 accompanied the Spanish explorer Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca on a
18 trek across Texas; by the late 1700s, some 450 people of African
19 descent were living in Spanish Texas, and in the early 1800s, many
20 African Americans from the South escaped across the Sabine River to
21 freedom, often settling in East Texas, where they undertook a
22 variety of occupations; and

23 WHEREAS, In the 19th century, before emancipation, African
24 Americans played an enormous role in producing the state's

1 agricultural bounty and also worked as skilled artisans; after the
2 Civil War, many moved to urban centers and, in the years that
3 followed, provided manpower for new industries that were
4 established; and

5 WHEREAS, African American infantry and cavalry garrisoned
6 forts in West Texas during the Indian Wars; known as "Buffalo
7 Soldiers," they patrolled the frontier with the assistance of black
8 Seminole Indian scouts, built roads, and escorted mail carriers;
9 Sergeant Emmanuel Stance, stationed at Fort McKavett, was the first
10 African American who fought in the Indian Wars to be awarded the
11 Medal of Honor; and

12 WHEREAS, Since the early 1800s, African Americans have been
13 involved in the cattle industry; one of the most famous black Texan
14 cowboys was Bill Pickett, who became a Wild West rodeo performer and
15 who is believed to have originated the bulldogging event; and

16 WHEREAS, In the mid-20th century, African Americans in Texas
17 substantially furthered the civil rights movement by filing and
18 winning lawsuits that outlawed the white primary and that helped to
19 integrate graduate and professional schools; today, influential
20 African American leaders continue to follow in the footsteps of
21 their predecessors, taking their rightful place in the public arena
22 and promoting social justice; and

23 WHEREAS, The contributions of African Americans in the nation
24 at large have not only impacted every facet of life in this country
25 but have had an influence around the globe; among the most notable
26 but perhaps least-known achievements have been advances in science
27 and technology; the long list of those who have distinguished

1 themselves in these fields includes Alexander Miles, who developed
2 the automated elevator door, Garrett Morgan, who invented the gas
3 mask and the traffic signal, Frederick Jones, who developed
4 refrigerated trucks and railroad cars, Dr. Charles Drew, who
5 developed a technique for preserving plasma and who established
6 blood banks across Europe and the Pacific during World War II,
7 saving the lives of countless American soldiers and sailors, and
8 Dr. Patricia E. Bath, who developed a method of eye surgery that
9 has helped many blind people to see; and

10 WHEREAS, The celebration of Black History Month highlights
11 the countless ways in which African Americans have helped to shape
12 this state and nation and acknowledges the immeasurable benefits of
13 living in a truly diverse society; now, therefore, be it

14 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 85th Texas
15 Legislature hereby commemorate February 2017 as Black History Month
16 and encourage all citizens to learn more about the history and
17 accomplishments of African Americans.