

By: Collier, Cook

H.C.R. No. 92

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 WHEREAS, One of the most celebrated military units in our
2 nation's history, the Tuskegee Airmen played a crucial role in the
3 Allied victory in World War II and in the advancement of civil
4 rights in the United States; and

5 WHEREAS, Although Black pilots served with French forces
6 during World War I, African Americans were excluded from the U.S.
7 Army Air Corps, even as the nation began preparing for another
8 global conflict in the late 1930s and early 1940s; the NAACP,
9 churches, and newspapers urged an end to this discrimination, and
10 President Franklin D. Roosevelt promised to meet their request
11 during his 1940 campaign; following his victory, he overruled his
12 top generals to order the creation of a separate flight training
13 program for Black aviators in 1941; and

14 WHEREAS, The 99th Pursuit Squadron, later renamed the 99th
15 Fighter Squadron, was activated as the first Black flying unit in
16 March of that year; its base was established at Tuskegee Institute
17 in Alabama, one of the nation's foremost African American colleges,
18 which already housed a successful civilian pilot training program
19 and owned a small private airfield; many military leaders of the
20 time considered Black soldiers inferior and expected the initiative
21 to fail, but the staff at Tuskegee Army Air Field immediately began
22 their efforts to prepare accomplished aviators; Colonel Noel F.
23 Parrish, the airfield's commander, mandated the same rigorous
24 training that was provided at other bases, and the determined

1 individuals who made up ranks of the Tuskegee Airmen eagerly took up
2 the challenge of becoming military pilots; and

3 WHEREAS, Led by West Point alumnus and future four-star
4 general Benjamin O. Davis Jr., a member of Tuskegee's first
5 graduating class, the pilots of the 99th Fighter Squadron initially
6 proved themselves in battles over North Africa and Italy; the unit
7 later joined three other Black squadrons, the 100th, 301st, and
8 302nd, to form the 332nd Fighter Group; from bases in Italy, they
9 destroyed numerous enemy aircraft and targets on the ground and at
10 sea; on escort missions for the 15th Air Force, which had been
11 losing a dozen bombers a day, the Tuskegee Airmen achieved a
12 dramatic turnaround, losing just five bombers on 205 missions;
13 their success in protecting Allied aircraft earned them the
14 nickname the Red-Tail Angels, in reference to the crimson color
15 scheme of their planes; and

16 WHEREAS, Between 1942 and 1946, nearly 1,000 Army Air Corps
17 pilots, 20 bomber pilots, and 16,000 ground personnel graduated
18 from Tuskegee; the airmen flew over 15,000 missions and earned more
19 than 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses, among myriad other
20 decorations; their record of excellence contributed to President
21 Harry Truman's decision to end segregation in the military with an
22 executive order in 1948; moreover, many former Tuskegee Airmen
23 became leaders in the United States Air Force, their communities,
24 and the Civil Rights Movement in the decades that followed; and

25 WHEREAS, A number of notable Texans served bravely as
26 Tuskegee Airmen; Robert T. McDaniel graduated from I. M. Terrell
27 High School in Fort Worth and became a flight officer with the 477th

1 Bombardier Group; he went on to distinguish himself as a principal
2 in the Fort Worth Independent School District, and he was named to
3 its Wall of Fame; that same honor was bestowed upon fellow Terrell
4 High graduate and Tuskegee Airman Captain Claude Robert Platte Jr.;
5 a Denison native, Captain Platte was born in 1921 and served as a
6 flight instructor, training more than 400 Black fighter pilots, and
7 he ultimately pursued an 18-year career in the U.S. Air Force;
8 Master Sergeant Joseph Benjamin Montgomery, born in Quitman in
9 1926, also built on his experience as a Tuskegee Airman, enlisting
10 in the U.S. Air Force in 1958 and serving for a quarter century
11 until his retirement in 1980; and

12 WHEREAS, Through their courage, skill, and patriotic
13 service, the Tuskegee Airmen valiantly answered their nation's call
14 to duty in World War II, contributing immeasurably to the
15 integration of the military and American society as a whole, and
16 their achievements are indeed deserving of special recognition;
17 now, therefore, be it

18 RESOLVED, That the 89th Legislature of the State of Texas
19 hereby designate the fourth Thursday of March as Tuskegee Airmen
20 Commemoration Day; and, be it further

21 RESOLVED, That, in accordance with the provisions of Section
22 [391.004\(d\)](#), Government Code, this designation remain in effect
23 until the 10th anniversary of the date this resolution is finally
24 passed by the legislature.