

By: West

S.C.R. No. 17

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
7 U.S. 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-Tailed 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 Air Force, their communities, and the Civil
24 Rights Movement in the decades that followed; and

25 WHEREAS, Through their courage, skill, and patriotic
26 service, the Tuskegee Airmen valiantly answered their nation's call
27 to duty in World War II, contributing immeasurably to the

1 integration of the military and American society as a whole, and
2 their achievements are indeed deserving of special recognition;
3 now, therefore, be it

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

7 RESOLVED, That, in accordance with the provisions of
8 Section 391.004(d), Government Code, this designation remain in
9 effect until the 10th anniversary of the date this resolution is
10 finally passed by the legislature.