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1 HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, February 2026 marks the historic 100th  
3 anniversary of the formal establishment of Black history  
4 commemorations in the United States, a milestone that honors  
5 the resilience, brilliance, and enduring contributions of  
6 African Americans to the fabric of our nation and the State of  
7 Illinois; and

8 WHEREAS, The origins of this observance trace back to 1915  
9 when historian Dr. Carter G. Woodson, who earned his master's  
10 degree from the University of Chicago, founded the Association  
11 for the Study of Negro Life and History (now the Association  
12 for the Study of African American Life and History) to  
13 research, promote, preserve, interpret, and disseminate  
14 information about the life, history, and culture of people of  
15 African descent; and

16 WHEREAS, In February 1926, Dr. Woodson launched Negro  
17 History Week, strategically choosing the second week of  
18 February to coincide with the birthdays of Frederick Douglass  
19 and Abraham Lincoln, two monumental symbols of American  
20 freedom; and

21 WHEREAS, Dr. Woodson's vision was never intended to limit  
22 the study of Black history to a single week but rather to serve

1 as a stepping stone toward the year-round integration of Black  
2 achievements into the American story, famously stating, "If a  
3 race has no history, if it has no worthwhile tradition, it  
4 becomes a negligible factor in the thought of the world, and it  
5 stands in danger of being exterminated."; and

6 WHEREAS, This weeklong observance evolved through the  
7 1960s amid the Civil Rights Movement and was expanded to  
8 become Black History Month in 1976 with the support of  
9 President Gerald Ford, who urged Americans to "seize the  
10 opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments  
11 of Black Americans"; and

12 WHEREAS, The State of Illinois has been a central stage  
13 for this history as the home of several innovators and  
14 pioneers, particularly in the arts, business, journalism, and  
15 public service, including:

16 (1) Jean Baptiste Point du Sable, known as the "Father  
17 of Chicago", for becoming the first permanent  
18 non-Indigenous settler of Chicago;

19 (2) Priscilla Baltimore, who, with the assistance of  
20 other families escaping slavery, founded the town of  
21 Brooklyn, which became an active center in the network  
22 known as the Underground Railroad, assisting other African  
23 Americans escaping enslavement, and later the first  
24 incorporated Black town in the United States;

1           (3) Annie Turnbo Malone, born in Metropolis to  
2           formerly enslaved parents, who turned her interest and  
3           passion for styling hair into a business that developed  
4           hair products for Black women and who later founded Poro  
5           College in St. Louis, which trained Madam C.J. Walker, who  
6           used her education and training at Poro to manufacture  
7           hair and beauty products for African Americans and become  
8           the first self-made female millionaire in the United  
9           States;

10          (4) John W.E. Thomas, the first Black state legislator  
11          in Illinois, who served in the Illinois House of  
12          Representatives;

13          (5) Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, pioneering medical  
14          doctor who performed the first successful open heart  
15          surgery in the United States in Chicago and who founded  
16          Provident Hospital, the first Black-owned and operated  
17          hospital in the United States and the first hospital in  
18          the United States to racially integrate patients and  
19          staff;

20          (6) Ida B. Wells, a fearless, Chicago-based  
21          investigative journalist, who traveled the United States  
22          to expose the horrific realities of racist terrorism and  
23          lynching;

24          (7) Oscar De Priest, the first African American  
25          congressman from Illinois and the first Black congressman  
26          elected in the 20th century in the United States, who

1 ended a nearly 30 year gap from when the first African  
2 Americans were elected to Congress during the  
3 Reconstruction Era after the Civil War;

4 (8) Robert Sengstacke Abbott, founder of the Chicago  
5 Defender, the mostly widely read and circulated  
6 Black-owned newspaper in the United States, which gave  
7 voice to issues of culture, life, and politics among  
8 African Americans;

9 (9) Bessie Coleman, the first Black woman to earn an  
10 international pilot's license, who captivated audiences  
11 with exhibitions and barnstorming tours;

12 (10) Muddy Waters, whose move from Mississippi to  
13 Chicago and adoption of electrically amplified  
14 instrumentation birthed the genre of Chicago blues music,  
15 which served as the direct and most primary antecedent of  
16 rock and roll music;

17 (11) Gwendolyn Brooks, a writer who became the first  
18 Black poet to win the Pulitzer Prize and the first Black  
19 woman to serve in the role known as the United States Poet  
20 Laureate;

21 (12) Carol Mosely Braun, the first Black woman elected  
22 to the United States Senate; and

23 (13) Barack and Michelle Obama, who became the  
24 nation's first African American President and First Lady;  
25 and

1           WHEREAS, Illinois has been and will continue to be shaped  
2 by countless citizens who contribute to Black history in their  
3 communities and help build the vibrant fabric of our State;  
4 and

5           WHEREAS, The 2026 national theme for Black History Month,  
6 A Century of Black History Commemorations, urges us to reflect  
7 on how these 100 years of community, history, and storytelling  
8 have transformed the status of Black people in the modern  
9 world and have protected the historical record against  
10 erasure; and

11           WHEREAS, As we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the  
12 United States independence, the struggle for equality,  
13 liberty, and opportunity by Black Americans, driven by  
14 scientists, laborers, entrepreneurs, educators, and artists,  
15 remains the greatest catalyst for American progress;  
16 therefore, be it

17           RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE  
18 HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that  
19 we recognize the 100th anniversary of the movement started by  
20 Dr. Carter G. Woodson to celebrate Black history; and be it  
21 further

22           RESOLVED, That we affirm that Black history is American

1 history, and its preservation is essential to the strength of  
2 our democracy and the freedoms we hold dear; and

3       RESOLVED, That we encourage all citizens, schools, and  
4 cultural institutions in Illinois to engage with the full,  
5 accurate truth of our history.