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INTRODUCED

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HJR26-1005

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

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House Committees

Senate Committees

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 26-1005

101 **CONCERNING RECOGNITION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN VETERANS.**

1 WHEREAS, The military history of African Americans spans from
2 the arrival of the first enslaved Africans during the colonial history of the
3 United States to the present day; and

4 WHEREAS, Throughout the history of the United States, African
5 Americans have honorably served in every military conflict fought by the
6 nation, often facing segregation, discrimination, and limited opportunities
7 while courageously defending our nation; and

8 WHEREAS, African Americans, despite being confined by the
9 segregation prevalent in our country, still chose the path of military
10 service to prove their worth as people and citizens; and

11 WHEREAS, Through their dedication and valor, African

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.
Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing law.
Dashes through the words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law.

1 American service members demonstrated their unwavering commitment
2 to the ideals of democracy and equality, even when those ideals were not
3 extended to them, and they ultimately helped to lay the groundwork for
4 the broader civil rights movement; and

5 WHEREAS, Even though many African American men and
6 women have tragically lost their lives in service to their country, these
7 and countless other African Americans chose the path of military service
8 to prove their worth, regain a sense of dignity, and secure a place of honor
9 within a society that often denied them fundamental rights. Through their
10 bravery, resilience, and determination, these individuals not only served
11 in defense of our nation but also fought for their right to stand as equals
12 alongside their fellow service members; and

13 WHEREAS, The military has long served as a unique arena in
14 which African American men and women could rise through the ranks,
15 challenging societal limitations and breaking barriers that confined them
16 to second-class status; and

17 WHEREAS, Despite facing segregation, discrimination, and
18 unequal treatment both within and outside of military service, African
19 American veterans persevered, demonstrating excellence, leadership, and
20 a deep commitment to duty, thus paving the way for future generations of
21 African American service members to continue the fight for equality,
22 justice, and respect within the armed forces and throughout American
23 society; and

24 WHEREAS, African American veterans have played pivotal roles
25 in every war fought by the United States, including the Revolutionary
26 War, the War of 1812, the Mexican-American War, the Civil War, the
27 Indian Wars, the Spanish-American War, both World Wars, the Korean
28 War, the Vietnam War, the Persian Gulf War, and conflicts in Iraq and
29 Afghanistan, demonstrating exceptional bravery and dedication; and

30 WHEREAS, During the Civil War, approximately 180,000 African
31 American soldiers served in the Union Army, making up nearly 10% of
32 its total force, and an additional 19,000 served in the Navy; President
33 Abraham Lincoln praised their courage, writing, "with silent tongue, and
34 clenched teeth, and steady eye, and well-poised bayonet, they have helped
35 mankind on to this great consummation"; and

36 WHEREAS, During World War I, more than 380,000 African

1 Americans served in the United States military, many of whom faced
2 segregation and discrimination while making invaluable contributions to
3 the war effort, like the Harlem Hellfighters infantry regiment, who spent
4 191 days on the front and were showered with honors for their valor by
5 the French soldiers they fought beside; and

6 WHEREAS, During World War II, more than 1.25 million African
7 Americans served in the United States military, including in combat and
8 support roles. More than 70% of the drivers on the Red Ball Express, the
9 famed trucking supply route and logistics operation, were African
10 American. They drove throughout the night and day in these vital roles,
11 dodging land mines and the threat of enemy aircraft to support "the
12 lifeline between combat and supply", as General Eisenhower wrote,
13 moving ammunition, fuel, food, and medical supplies to the battlefield.
14 Their work hastened the surrender of the Germans and the end of the war
15 on the Western Front. These soldiers and the many other African
16 Americans who served throughout World War II broke barriers that paved
17 the way for the desegregation of the armed forces; and

18 WHEREAS, Despite the dedication and sacrifice of African
19 American service members, many military authorities have historically
20 been skeptical of their patriotism, questioning their loyalty and
21 commitment to the nation they bravely served. This skepticism persisted
22 prior to the end of slavery, through Reconstruction, and well into the 20th
23 century. Even as African Americans fought valiantly in wars such as the
24 Civil War, World War I, and World War II, they were often relegated to
25 segregated units, given less prestigious assignments, or denied the
26 recognition they deserved; and

27 WHEREAS, This unjust treatment continued, despite the work of
28 the courageous servicemen and servicewomen and those who advocated
29 for them. Finally, in 1948, after the President's Committee on Civil Rights
30 concluded that segregation was "indefensible" and that "by preventing
31 entire groups from making their maximum contribution to the national
32 defense, we weaken our defense", President Harry S. Truman issued
33 Executive Order 9981, which required "equality of treatment and
34 opportunity for all" in the armed forces. However, even after this official
35 policy change, African American veterans continued to face barriers to
36 full equality in the military, struggling against systemic racism,
37 discrimination, and unequal opportunities for advancement, despite their
38 proven dedication to defending the very freedoms that often eluded them
39 in civilian life; and

1 WHEREAS, The implementation of Executive Order 9981 marked
2 a turning point in United States military history, leading to the gradual
3 integration of African Americans into all branches of the armed forces
4 and paving the way for broader civil rights advancements in American
5 society. However, despite this order, desegregation of the military was not
6 fully realized for several years, and all-African-American units persisted
7 well into the Korean War, with the last all-African-American unit not
8 being disbanded until 1954; and

9 WHEREAS, Despite their unwavering service, African American
10 veterans have historically been denied equal rights and benefits, including
11 access to the GI Bill, housing assistance, and other veteran services,
12 highlighting the need for continued advocacy and justice; and

13 WHEREAS, While African American service members continue
14 to demonstrate vigilance and resilience in all aspects of military service,
15 there remains much work to be done in the pursuit of equality,
16 opportunity, and recognition. African American men and women have led
17 the charge in advocating for a more inclusive military, clearing a path for
18 future generations to serve with dignity and pride. Their tireless efforts
19 have not only secured a place for them within the military but have also
20 opened doors for other African Americans to excel in leadership roles,
21 advancing both military service and broader societal progress; and

22 WHEREAS, The African American community takes great pride
23 in the enduring legacies left by those who have served, and they continue
24 to build upon the foundation of excellence, determination, and courage
25 laid by those who came before, ensuring that their contributions are
26 remembered and that their history serves as an inspiration for the next
27 generation of service members and leaders; and

28 WHEREAS, The Tuskegee Airmen, the first group of African
29 American military pilots in the United States armed forces during World
30 War II; the Buffalo Soldiers, whose first regiments were formed and
31 forged on the frontier; the Montford Point Marines, the first African
32 Americans to say "Semper Fi" at Camp Lejeune; and countless other
33 African American military units and individuals have left an indelible
34 mark on United States history, inspiring future generations and reshaping
35 the armed forces; and

36 WHEREAS, The late Lieutenant Colonel Clarence Shivers and
37 Colonel James Harvey III stand as towering figures in African American

1 military history, particularly in the context of the Tuskegee Airmen.
2 Lieutenant Colonel Shivers, a distinguished member of the Tuskegee
3 Airmen, served with bravery and distinction during World War II in the
4 332nd Fighter Group, which was known for its distinctive red-tailed
5 aircraft and played a significant role in escorting bombers during missions
6 over Europe. His legacy is immortalized with a statue dedicated to him at
7 the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, symbolizing
8 his remarkable contributions to the United States Air Force and the
9 struggle for equality in military service. Shivers retired in 1969, having
10 proven himself an integral part of the Tuskegee Airmen, a group of
11 pioneering African American pilots who shattered racial barriers in
12 aviation; and

13 WHEREAS, Colonel James Harvey III made his mark as one of
14 the first African American officers in the United States Air Force.
15 Harvey's leadership and service during and after World War II continue
16 to inspire future generations of airmen. As a member of the Tuskegee
17 Airmen, he helped pave the way for the eventual integration of the United
18 States Air Force and contributed to the desegregation of the military; and

19 WHEREAS, Both Lieutenant Colonel Shivers' and Colonel
20 Harvey's careers exemplify the courage, resilience, and professionalism
21 of African American service members in the face of adversity, making
22 them iconic figures in the history of Colorado military service; and

23 WHEREAS, Cathay Williams made history in 1866 as the first
24 African American woman to serve in the United States military. She
25 joined the 38th United States Infantry Regiment, which was stationed in
26 the western frontier during the post-Civil War era. She was honorably
27 discharged and passed away in Colorado, and her memorial is in Pueblo;
28 and

29 WHEREAS, Wanda James, a distinguished veteran of the United
30 States Navy, made history as the first African American woman to be a
31 part of the Naval ROTC program at the University of Colorado Boulder.
32 Her groundbreaking service in the Navy paved the way for future
33 generations of African American women to pursue military careers. In her
34 continued commitment to public service and higher education, James
35 currently serves as a member of the University of Colorado Board of
36 Regents, where she has made a profound and lasting impact on the lives
37 of students, advocating for inclusive policies and supporting initiatives
38 that foster academic excellence, diversity, and leadership development

1 within the university community; and

2 WHEREAS, Leslie Summey, a United States Navy veteran, is the
3 first African American person to ever be elected as a Commissioner on
4 the Arapahoe County Board of County Commissioners and was sworn
5 into office on January 9, 2023. Her current term expires January 2027.
6 She serves as the first African American chair of the Arapahoe County
7 Board of County Commissioners; and

8 WHEREAS, The 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion,
9 known as the "Six Triple Eight", was an all-African-American, all-female
10 unit during World War II, playing a critical role in maintaining morale
11 and communication between United States soldiers stationed overseas and
12 their families back home. This battalion, which served in Europe, was
13 tasked with sorting and delivering delayed mail to troops, facing
14 tremendous challenges due to the sheer volume of undelivered packages.
15 The women of the 6888th, led by Lieutenant Colonel Charity Adams
16 Earley, displayed incredible determination and dedication, working
17 around the clock to ensure that soldiers received their letters and supplies;
18 and

19 WHEREAS, The 6888th's contributions were overlooked for many
20 years, but their service was integral to the success of wartime efforts and
21 a milestone in the integration of women into the military. The 6888th is
22 now recognized as one of the most important units in African American
23 and women's military history; and

24 WHEREAS, John W. Mosley Jr. persevered through adversity
25 throughout his life, inspired by his father, John W. Mosley Sr., who was
26 born into slavery and migrated west to Colorado in the 1880s, during the
27 silver boom, seeking opportunity. In an era of Jim Crow laws, Mosley Sr.
28 secured employment as a Pullman porter, one of the few jobs available to
29 African American workers at the time; and

30 WHEREAS, In 1939, John W. Mosley Jr. enrolled at the
31 Agricultural College of Colorado, now Colorado State University,
32 becoming the first African American letterman in the school's history.
33 Many refer to him as the Jackie Robinson of CSU athletics. In 1998,
34 Mosley Jr. was inducted into the CSU Sports Hall of Fame, and in 2009,
35 he was admitted into the Colorado Sports Hall of Fame; and

36 WHEREAS, After college, Mosley Jr. joined the Tuskegee Airmen

1 and trained as a bomber pilot, one of the first African Americans to do so.
2 Lieutenant Colonel Mosley served for over 25 years on active and reserve
3 duty, including during World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam
4 War. He participated in the Berlin Airlift, achieved the rank of command
5 pilot, and served as both a trainer and mentor to young pilots. Mosley Jr.
6 often remarked, "I had to fight in order to fight!"; and

7 WHEREAS, In 2015, Aurora Public Schools dedicated a school
8 for children in preschool to 8th grade, Edna and John W. Mosley P-8, to
9 Mosley Jr. and his wife. Open since October 1, 2015, near Airport
10 Boulevard and Second Avenue in Aurora, Colorado, the school currently
11 serves over 900 students; and

12 WHEREAS, In 2021, Congress proposed a bill to dedicate the
13 newly built VA community-based outpatient clinic in Aurora, Colorado,
14 to Lieutenant Colonel Mosley. The ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on
15 January 27, 2025, and the clinic opened its doors to veterans on February
16 3, joining the VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System, which serves
17 over 100,000 veterans annually; and

18 WHEREAS, The contributions of African American veterans
19 extend beyond the battlefield, as they have continued to serve their
20 communities as leaders, activists, educators, and public servants; and

21 WHEREAS, Recognizing the sacrifices and achievements of
22 African American veterans is essential to ensuring their legacy is honored
23 and their stories are preserved for future generations; and

24 WHEREAS, We formally acknowledge and honor the
25 extraordinary service and sacrifices of African American veterans
26 throughout United States history; now, therefore,

27 *Be It Resolved by the House of Representatives of the Seventy-fifth
28 General Assembly of the State of Colorado, the Senate concurring herein:*

29 That we, the General Assembly, in recognition of the heroic efforts
30 and significant sacrifices of African American veterans:

31 (1) Support efforts to ensure African American veterans receive
32 equitable access to benefits, health care, and resources that they have
33 rightfully earned through their service;

10 *Be It Further Resolved*, That copies of this Joint Resolution be sent
11 to the Congressional Black Caucus; the National Black Caucus of State
12 Legislators; the Retired Enlisted Association; the Tuskegee Airmen, Inc.;
13 the Colorado Black Women for Political Action; State Immediate Past
14 Commander Carol Thomas, Department of Colorado Veterans of Foreign
15 Wars; the American Legion Department of Colorado; the United Veterans
16 Coalition of Colorado; the Disabled American Veterans Department of
17 Colorado; the Mountain States Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of
18 America; Colonel James H. Harvey III; Mrs. Peggy Shivers, the wife of
19 the late Lieutenant Colonel Clarence Shivers; and Aaron Futrell, grandson
20 of John W. Mosley Jr.