

**First Regular Session
Seventy-first General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO**

INTRODUCED

LLS NO. R17-0838.01 Erin Enders x3205

SJR17-020

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

Williams A.,

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

Jackson,

Senate Committees

House Committees

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 17-020

101 **CONCERNING DESIGNATING THE FOURTH THURSDAY IN MARCH AS**
102 **"TUSKEGEE AIRMEN COMMEMORATION DAY".**

1 WHEREAS, Prior to World War II, African Americans had very
2 limited roles in the defense of the nation and no role in military aviation;
3 and

4 WHEREAS, The United States Army War College issued a grossly
5 inaccurate and disparaging "Official Report" in 1925 with the intent to
6 relegate African Americans to menial duty positions in the military; and

7 WHEREAS, More African Americans were receiving higher
8 education by the time the United States was drawn into World War II, and
9 therefore many were aspiring to more meaningful jobs in the military,
10 including the role of airplane pilot; and

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.
Capital letters indicate new material to be added to existing statute.
Dashes through the words indicate deletions from existing statute.

1 WHEREAS, The rapid expansion of aircraft production to meet
2 the demand for air power during World War II in turn created a greater
3 need for military pilots; and

4 WHEREAS, The public outcry from the African American
5 population, African American media, and fair-minded people of all races
6 resulted in the United States War Department extending the opportunity
7 to fly airplanes to all military members, regardless of race; and

8 WHEREAS, The War Department's Civilian Pilot Training (CPT)
9 Program authorized colleges and universities to train civilian students to
10 increase the number of civilian pilots, thus contributing to military
11 preparedness; and

12 WHEREAS, The Tuskegee Institute in Alabama was one of six
13 African American colleges and universities chosen to participate in the
14 CPT Program, and helped open the door for the first African American
15 military pilots; and

16 WHEREAS, In 1942, five men received the silver wings of Army
17 Air Force pilots and were the first African Americans to qualify as
18 military pilots in any branch of the United States Armed Forces; and

19 WHEREAS, By the end of World War II, almost 1,000 African
20 Americans had won their silver wings at Tuskegee Army Air Field, and
21 almost half of those African Americans went on to serve the country in
22 the European and Mediterranean theaters as combat mission fighter
23 pilots; and

24 WHEREAS, The Tuskegee Airmen flew more than 15,000 sorties;
25 destroyed over 1,000 German aircraft; received hundreds of Air Medals
26 and more than 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses; and lost very few
27 bomber aircraft to enemy air action during escort missions; and

28 WHEREAS, The outstanding performance record of the Tuskegee
29 Airmen was unprecedented in military aviation history, thus disproving
30 every adverse, prejudiced contention barring African Americans from
31 becoming pilots prior to World War II; and

32 WHEREAS, The Tuskegee Airmen overcame segregation and
33 prejudice to become one of the most prestigious, decorated, and respected

1 fighting groups of World War II; and

2 WHEREAS, Nineteen documented original Tuskegee Airmen have
3 direct connections in the State of Colorado; now, therefore,

4 *Be It Resolved by the Senate of the Seventy-first General Assembly*
5 *of the State of Colorado, the House of Representatives concurring herein:*

6 That we, the General Assembly, in recognition of the Tuskegee
7 Airmen's heroic efforts, designate the fourth Thursday in March
8 "Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day", March being a special month
9 for the Tuskegee Airmen as it was the month that the first cadets received
10 their silver wings; the first maintenance crew began training at Chanute
11 Field, IL; the first Pursuit Squadron (The 99th) was activated; and
12 President George W. Bush, in 2007, presented the Congressional Gold
13 Medal to the Tuskegee Airmen.

14 *Be It Further Resolved*, That copies of this Joint Resolution be sent
15 to Tuskegee University and the Organization of Black Aerospace
16 Professionals.