

A CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION

23-15

COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

February 5, 2019

To recognize the fourth Thursday in March of each year as Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day and to honor the more than 15,000 men and women involved in the "Tuskegee Experience," who were trained by the Army Air Corps to fly and maintain combat aircraft, and to serve as navigators, bombardiers, instructors, and support staff, each of whom, known collectively as the Tuskegee Airmen, played an essential role in keeping the planes in the air.

WHEREAS, before World War II, African Americans had very limited roles in the defense of our nation with none in military aviation;

WHEREAS, when the United States was drawn into World War II, African Americans were aspiring to more meaningful jobs in the military, including flying and maintaining aircraft;

WHEREAS, the rapid expansion of aircraft production during the war created a greater need for military pilots;

WHEREAS, the public outcry from diverse groups across the country exhorted the War Department to extend the opportunity to fly airplanes to all military members;

WHEREAS, the United States War Department's Civilian Pilot Training ("CPT") Program authorized selected colleges, universities, and vocational schools around the country to provide training to civilians;

WHEREAS, Tuskegee Institute in Alabama was one of 6 historically black schools, along with Delaware State, Hampton Institute, Howard University, North Carolina A&T, and West Virginia State, chosen to participate in the CPT Program;

WHEREAS, Tuskegee Institute was selected to offer advanced CPT training, and finally was the sole site for segregated military flying training;

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WHEREAS, Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., who was born in Washington, D.C., was a 1936 graduate of the U. S. Military Academy at West Point and a graduate in the first class of pilots from Tuskegee Army Flying School;

WHEREAS, Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., later became commander of the 99th Fighter Squadron, the 332nd Fighter Group, and subsequent Tuskegee Airmen units, and ultimately became the first African-American general in the United States Air Force;

WHEREAS, the outstanding performance of the Tuskegee Airmen was unprecedented in military aviation history;

WHEREAS, the month of March is a special month for the Tuskegee Airmen, as it is the month the first maintenance crews began training at Chanute Field, Illinois; the first aviation cadets received their wings; the first Pursuit Squadron, the 99th, was activated; and the month in which President George W. Bush presented the Tuskegee Airmen with the Congressional Gold Medal;

WHEREAS, many Tuskegee Airmen have lived and worked in the District and have made significant contributions to the city long after their WW II service;

WHEREAS, original Tuskegee Airmen who currently reside within the District of Columbia include (Private) Major Anderson, (Aviation Cadets) William Fauntroy and Walter Robinson, and (Twin engine pilot) John Curry; and

WHEREAS, other Tuskegee Airmen who have lived in the District before, during, or following their military careers, include Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., Harry Sheppard, James Hurd, Vance Marchbanks, Thomas Money, Ira O'Neal, William Campbell, James L. Hall, Jr., Lee Rayford, Andrew Turner, William T. Mattison, Curtis C. Robinson, Harold Martin, Sidat Singh, Albert Manning, Jr., Wiley Selden, Elmer D. Jones, Clarence D. Lester, Gordon T. Boyd, Jr., Woodrow W. Crockett, Alfred McKenzie, Philip Lee, and John Suggs.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the "Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day Recognition Resolution of 2019".

Sec. 2. The Council of the District of Columbia recognizes and honors the sacrifice, dedication, and commitment to service exhibited by the 15,000 Tuskegee Airmen and to their connections to the District of Columbia.

Sec. 3. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon the first date of publication in the District of Columbia Register.