



SPONSOR: Rep. Dorsey Walker & Sen. Brown
Reps. Harris, Chukwuocha, Bolden, Cooke, K. Johnson,
Lambert, Minor-Brown, S. Moore, Neal, Parker Selby,
Phillips, Wilson-Anton, Carson, Bush; Sens. Lockman,
Pinkney, Buckson, Gay, Hansen, Hocker, Hoffner,
Huxtable, Lawson, Mantzavinos, S. McBride, Paradee,
Pettyjohn, Poore, Richardson, Sokola, Sturgeon,
Townsend, Walsh, Wilson

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
152nd GENERAL ASSEMBLY

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 22

RECOGNIZING THE 4TH THURSDAY IN MARCH AS NATIONAL TUSKEGEE AIRMEN COMMEMORATION DAY.

1 WHEREAS, the Tuskegee Airmen were a group of Black pilots, aircrew, ground crew, and support personnel of
2 the U.S. Army Air Corps who fought in World War II. As the first African American flying units in the U.S. military, their
3 many successes paved the way for the desegregation of the U.S. military, which started in 1948 when President Harry S.
4 Truman signed Executive Order 9981; and

5 WHEREAS, the history of the Tuskegee Airmen dates back to World War I, when African American men
6 attempted to serve in U.S. air units but were denied entry. Early African American Aviators like Eugene Bullard, Cornelius
7 Coffey, James Banning, and Delawarean, Louis R. Purnell, Sr. had to persevere beyond the unjust race-based policies in the
8 U.S. military and discrimination in civilian aviation; and

9 WHEREAS, by 1939, only 25 African Americans were licensed pilots in the United States. This stark inequity
10 finally forced Congress to act. On June 27, 1939, Congress passed the Civilian Pilot Training Act, which prohibited
11 exclusion based on race from federally funded pilot training programs; and

12 WHEREAS, six Black colleges participated in the program: Howard University, Delaware State College,
13 Hampton University, North Carolina A&T, Tuskegee Institute and West Virginia State College. These necessary
14 advancements in Black aviation laid the groundwork for the extraordinary achievements of African American Aviators in
15 World War II; and

16 WHEREAS, the illustrious service record of the Tuskegee Airmen began on March 19, 1941, when the United
17 States Army Air Corps officially constituted the 99th Pursuit Squadron as the first all-Black combat squadron in the United
18 States Armed Forces. The squadron was trained at the newly constructed Tuskegee Army Air Field in Tuskegee, Alabama,
19 a few miles away from the Tuskegee Institute; and

20 WHEREAS, by June 1943, the renamed 99th Fighter Squadron was flying combat missions over Sicily and the
21 Mediterranean, supporting Allied bombers, naval formations, and other offensives. The Tuskegee Airmen scored several
22 aerial victories against German FW-190s, BF-109s, and ME-262s, eventually earning three Distinguished Unit Citations in
23 combat missions over the Mediterranean and Central Europe; and

24 WHEREAS, by World War II's end, three other all-Black Fighter Squadrons were activated, all under the
25 332nd Fighter Group, as well as the 477th Bombardment Group flying B-25 medium bombers. Despite their successes, the
26 Tuskegee Airmen endured extreme adversity, including notably prejudiced and unsuccessful attempts to disband the
27 332nd Fighter Group. The Tuskegee Airmen would fly over 15,000 combat sorties in World War II and receiving 744 air
28 medals, including 96 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 14 Bronze Stars, and 8 Purple Hearts; and

29 WHEREAS, As World War II ended, the Tuskegee Airmen in the 477th Bombardment Group staged a nonviolent
30 demonstration to desegregate the officer's club at Freeman Field, Indiana. Their demonstration for racial equity, staged
31 between April 5-6, 1945, would prove to be a catalyst for the eventual desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces. After the
32 war, the Tuskegee Airmen won one last aerial victory in 1949 when they won the first ever U.S. Air Force Aerial Gunnery
33 Competition (propeller), now known as "Top Gun," beating the best pilots in the U.S. Air Force. By July of 1949, the
34 332nd Fighter Group, the 477th Bombardment Group, and all other all-Black Aviation units of the U.S. Air Force were
35 deactivated as the U.S. military finally moved toward full racial integration; and

36 WHEREAS, The Tuskegee Airmen achieved unparalleled success, not just for their martial excellence but for their
37 grit and determination as a trailblazing unit that would prove segregation a failed and unjust policy.

38 NOW, THEREFORE:

39 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the 152nd General Assembly of the State of Delaware, the
40 Senate concurring therein, that the General Assembly hereby supports Congressional efforts to proclaim the 4th Thursday in
41 March as National Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day.

SYNOPSIS

This Concurrent Resolution supports Congressional efforts to proclaim the 4th Thursday in March a National Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day.