
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 7

Session of
2017

INTRODUCED BY GREENLEAF, VOGEL, SCAVELLO, FARNESE, COSTA,
FONTANA, STREET, HAYWOOD, AUMENT, SCHWANK AND HUGHES,
JANUARY 24, 2017

REFERRED TO RULES AND EXECUTIVE NOMINATIONS, JANUARY 24, 2017

A RESOLUTION

1 Honoring the contributions that African Americans have made in
2 building our nation, acknowledging the wrongs of slavery and
3 expressing Pennsylvania's profound regret for its role in
4 slavery.

5 WHEREAS, Observances are held across the country and this
6 Commonwealth during the month of February to increase public
7 awareness of the importance of black history and the
8 contributions that African Americans have made toward their
9 country's rich history; and

10 WHEREAS, The contributions of African-American citizens as
11 scientists, inventors, legislators, farmers, educators,
12 explorers and countless other professions have greatly benefited
13 our nation and this Commonwealth; and

14 WHEREAS, African Americans have, throughout our country's
15 history, made it possible for us to move closer to the ideals on
16 which America was founded, as stated in the Declaration of
17 Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all
18 men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator

1 with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life,
2 Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness"; and

3 WHEREAS, During the existence of the trans-Atlantic slave
4 trade, millions of Africans were forcibly abducted and enslaved
5 in the New World and millions more died during passage; and

6 WHEREAS, To prime Africans for slavery, the fundamental
7 values of the Africans were shattered; and

8 WHEREAS, Slaves were brutalized, humiliated, dehumanized and
9 subjected to the indignity of being stripped of their names and
10 heritage, women and girls were raped and families were
11 disassembled as husbands and wives, mothers and daughters and
12 fathers and sons were sold into slavery apart from one another;
13 and

14 WHEREAS, A series of complex colonial laws were enacted to
15 relegate the status of Africans and their descendants to
16 slavery, in spite of their loyalty, dedication and service to
17 the country, including heroic and distinguished service in the
18 Revolutionary War, the Civil War and all other conflicts and
19 military actions involving the United States military; and

20 WHEREAS, Colonial Pennsylvania was a slave-owning society
21 with an estimated population of 11,000 slaves in 1754 and the
22 lives of free blacks in the colony were controlled by law; and

23 WHEREAS, While the United States outlawed the trans-Atlantic
24 slave trade in 1808, the domestic slave trade in the colonies
25 and illegal importation continued for several decades; and

26 WHEREAS, The system of slavery had become entrenched in
27 American history and the social fabric and the issue of enslaved
28 Africans had to be addressed as a national issue, contributing
29 to the Civil War from 1861 to 1865 and the passage of the 13th
30 Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which

1 abolished slavery and involuntary servitude on December 6, 1865;
2 and

3 WHEREAS, Throughout their existence in the United States and
4 during the decades after the Civil Rights Movement, African
5 Americans have found the struggle to overcome the bitter legacy
6 of slavery long and arduous and for many African Americans the
7 scars left behind are unbearable, haunting their psyches and
8 clouding their vision of the future and of the nation's many
9 positive attributes; and

10 WHEREAS, The story of the enslavement of Africans and their
11 descendants, the human carnage and the dehumanizing atrocities
12 committed during slavery should not be purged from
13 Pennsylvania's history or discounted; and

14 WHEREAS, The faith, perseverance, hope and endless triumphs
15 of African Americans and their significant contributions to the
16 development of this Commonwealth and the nation should be
17 embraced, celebrated and retold for generations to come; and

18 WHEREAS, An apology for centuries of brutal dehumanization
19 and injustices cannot erase the past, but acknowledgement of the
20 wrongs can speed racial healing and reconciliation and help
21 Pennsylvanians confront the ghosts of their pasts; and

22 WHEREAS, To date, nine states have issued resolutions
23 apologizing for slavery; and

24 WHEREAS, The House of Representatives of the Congress of the
25 United States passed a resolution in 2008 apologizing for
26 slavery and subsequent discriminatory laws and the Senate of the
27 Congress of the United States passed a similar resolution in
28 2009; and

29 WHEREAS, It is important for Pennsylvania to make a formal
30 apology for slavery so that it can move forward and seek

1 reconciliation and harmony for all its residents; and

2 WHEREAS, We recognize the blood, sweat and tears of African
3 Americans and also recognize the inheritance stolen from them
4 and honor their significant redemptive contributions to the
5 building of America; therefore be it

6 RESOLVED, That the Senate honor the contributions that
7 African Americans have made in building our nation; and be it
8 further

9 RESOLVED, That the Senate acknowledge the fundamental
10 injustice, cruelty, brutality and inhumanity of slavery; and be
11 it further

12 RESOLVED, That the Senate apologize for Pennsylvania's role
13 in slavery and the wrongs committed against African Americans
14 and their ancestors who suffered under slavery; and be it
15 further

16 RESOLVED, That the Senate express its deepest sympathies and
17 solemn regrets to those who were enslaved and the descendants of
18 those slaves who were deprived of life, human dignity and the
19 constitutional protections accorded to all citizens of the
20 United States; and be it further

21 RESOLVED, That the Senate implore all residents of this
22 Commonwealth to be tolerant and understanding of one another,
23 with the goal of eliminating all racial bias, prejudice and
24 discriminatory behavior and to remember and teach their children
25 about the history of slavery to ensure that these tragedies will
26 neither be forgotten nor repeated; and be it further

27 RESOLVED, That it is the intent of the Senate that this
28 resolution not be used in, or be the basis of, any type of
29 litigation.