

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 377

Offered January 10, 2001

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Designating February 25 as "African-American Scientist and Inventor Day."

Patrons – Lambert, Miller, Y.B. and Puckett

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the historical experience of Americans of African descent began more than 5,000 years before the Christian Era, with notable scientists, mathematicians, and inventors such as Imhotep, who is recognized by contemporary historians as the first architect, a pioneer in mathematics, an eminent sage and patron of scribes, a respected leader among early Egyptian and Greek civilizations, builder of the first pyramid, and the physician upon whose knowledge and teachings about human anatomy and the functions of the major organs modern medicine rests; and

WHEREAS, although the vast majority of African-Americans have been educated to believe that there have been only three great civilizations in the world—Greek, Roman, and British Empire—the African-American history and experience are ones of great achievement and the creation of magnificent empires, nations and civilization, characterized by outstanding leaders, statesmen, inventors, builders, scientists, doctors, historians, craftsmen, philosophers, artisans, musicians, explorers, scholars, and militarists; and

WHEREAS, African-Americans have earned an undeniable role in the development of the culture of this Commonwealth and the nation, contributing major inventions and scientific discoveries, among other things, that enrich the quality of life for all mankind; and

WHEREAS, the scientific and technological contributions of African-Americans to the world are absent from history books, have been largely ignored by the majority culture, were prohibited by law to be patented, and continue to be shrouded in misinformation and misrepresentation; and

WHEREAS, the ethos of this rich and proud people, descendants of kings and queens, has been passed down to generations through whispered tales by a remnant of African-American ancestors who understood the relationship between honor, respect, and appreciation of heritage and culture, and the vision and success of future generations; and

WHEREAS, it is with this spirit that we recognize and celebrate the creative genius and contributions of Annie Easley, Sharon J. Barnes, Thomas L. Jennings, Dr. Benjamin S. Carson, David Blackwell, David N. Crosthwait, Elijah McCoy, Clarence A. Ellis, Phillip Emeagwali, Charles R. Drew, Sarah E. Goode, Granville T. Woods, Lewis H. Latimer, Meredith C. Gourdine, Ernest E. Just, Evelyn Boyd Granville, Norbert Rillieux, Mae C. Jemison, George Carruthers, Garret A. Morgan, J. Ernest Wilkins, Sarah Boone, and numerous other African-Americans whose great achievements evidence a vast pool of untapped intellect; and

WHEREAS, education has been the social, economic, and political gatekeeper for African-Americans, and will become increasingly so for students of color desiring to participate fully in the scientific and technological innovations of the new millennium; and

WHEREAS, although data indicate that progress has been made in the educational attainment of African-Americans, they remain less likely than whites and Asians to graduate from high school, enroll in college, graduate from college, and pursue graduate and professional degrees; and

WHEREAS, African-Americans represent approximately 12 percent of the population in the United States, but only three percent of the total science and engineering labor force, less than one percent of scientists and engineers, two percent of doctoral scientists and engineers, and one quarter of one percent of computer scientists; and

WHEREAS, if the declining number and percentage of African-American high school and college students choosing careers in the biological and physical sciences that require undergraduate and advanced degrees in chemistry, technology, medicine, computer science, physics, mathematics, engineering, and biology continues unabated, the serious shortage of African-American scientists, mathematicians, physicians, computer scientists, and inventors would cause serious harm to America's leadership in scientific research; and

WHEREAS, the dreams and aspirations of too many African-American youth have withered and must be revitalized with the message that they descend from the loins of a proud and noble people who expected and settled for nothing less than excellence in every endeavor, and whose greatness is an indelible mark on the world; and

WHEREAS, it is vital that the citizens of the Commonwealth, especially young African-Americans, realize and appreciate the important contributions of their forebears and contemporaries to the creation and development of Virginian and American society; and

WHEREAS, to fulfill the Commonwealth's commitment to equal opportunity and prosperity for every citizen, it is imperative that African-American youth and Virginians of all races and ages realize that the field of science, mathematics, engineering, and technology are available and accessible to every one; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the Commonwealth acknowledge and recognize the significant achievements and contributions of African-American scientists, mathematicians, and inventors, many of whom were native sons and daughters of Virginia, with a special day on which these great minds may be honored and esteemed; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That February 25 each year be designated as "African-American Scientist and Inventor Day"; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Governor be requested to call upon the citizens of the Commonwealth to recognize and celebrate "African-American Scientist and Inventor Day" with appropriate commemorative activities in which all Virginians may unite and participate; and, be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the Senate transmit a copy of this resolution to the Secretary of Education, the Superintendent of Public Education, the President of the Virginia Parents and Teachers Association, the President of the Virginia Education Association, the Director of the African American Inventors Institute, the President of Virginia Union University, and the Director of the Science Museum of Virginia, requesting that they disseminate copies of this resolution among their respective constituents so that they may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly in this matter.