



Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County, TN

Legislation Text

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A resolution recognizing February 2024 as Black History Month in Nashville and Davidson County.

WHEREAS, Black History Month is celebrated each February and recognizes the legacy of Black Americans whose power to lead, to overcome, and to expand the meaning and practice of American democracy has helped our Nation become a more fair and just society; and

WHEREAS, the United States was established upon the profound but simple idea that all people are created equal and should be treated equally throughout their lives. However, this is not an idea that America has always lived up to; and

WHEREAS, in 1925, an African-American scholar, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, launched an effort to focus awareness on the contributions of African Americans to American society that, in 1976, became Black History Month, a month-long celebration in February of the estimable contributions of African Americans to this country; and

WHEREAS, this month, we celebrate and recognize Black leaders, inventors, artists, musicians, organizers, activists, and creators on a national level including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Barack Obama, George Washington Carver, Harriet Tubman, Shirley Chisholm, Jackie Robinson, Billie Holiday, and many more; and

WHEREAS, we also celebrate those locally who have contributed to the rich history of our community in Nashville and Davidson County; and

WHEREAS, in 1951, Z. Alexander Looby and Robert E. Lillard were the first Black members of the Nashville City Council since 1911, when Solomon P. Harris was elected to the Nashville City Council. After being sworn into office, Looby and Lillard focused on legislation and policies to do away with Jim Crow laws and introduced bills to desegregate public spaces; and

WHEREAS, in 1963, the first Metropolitan Council of Nashville and Davidson County was sworn in. Among the 40 members were five Black Council members: Z. Alexander Looby, Robert E. Lillard, Mansfield Douglas, John Driver, and Harold Love, Sr.; and

WHEREAS, over the years, 63 Black members have served on the Metropolitan Council, including future state senators Thelma Harper and Brenda Gilmore, Civil Rights leader Kwame L. Lillard, future judge Sam Coleman, Ludy Wallace, Vernon Winfrey, and many other esteemed public servants; and

WHEREAS, the first Black female member of Council, Lois Jordan, was elected in 1971; and

WHEREAS, the first Black Council members at Large, Carolyn Baldwin Tucker and Howard Gentry, Jr., were elected in 1999. Howard Gentry, Jr. was elected as the first Black vice mayor in 2002 and was reelected in 2003. Howard Gentry, Jr. was appointed as the first Black Criminal Court Clerk of Davidson County in 2011 and was reelected to the position in 2012. He has since been elected to the position three times; and

WHEREAS, Brenda Wynn became the first Black Davidson County Clerk in 2014 and has been reelected twice to that role. Vivian Wilhoite was elected as the first Black Assessor of Property in 2016 and was reelected in 2020; and

WHEREAS, Karen Y. Johnson was elected as the first Black Register of Deeds in 2018 and was reelected in 2022. In 2018, Martesha Johnson Moore became the first Black Public Defender elected in Nashville and Davidson County. Lonnell Matthews, Jr. was elected as the first Black Juvenile Court Clerk in 2018 and was reelected in 2022; and

WHEREAS, Erica Gilmore was elected as the first Black Davidson County Trustee in 2020 and was reelected in 2022. Joseph P. Day became the first Black Circuit Court Clerk after his election in 2022; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and proper for the Metropolitan Council to recognize the enormous contributions and commitment to public service of the Black community in Nashville and Davidson County on the occasion of Black History Month.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY:

Section 1. The Metropolitan County Council hereby goes on record as recognizing February 2024 as Black History Month in Nashville and Davidson County and further recognizes the immeasurable contribution of Black leadership in the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County.

Section 2. This Resolution shall take effect from and after its adoption, the welfare of The Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County requiring it.