

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2nd Session of the 60th Legislature (2026)

SENATE

RESOLUTION 29

By: Nice and Goodwin

AS INTRODUCED

A Resolution recognizing and celebrating February as Black History Month; recounting legislative actions; remembering the roles of Black Oklahomans in the Civil Rights Movement; and honoring the contributions of Black Oklahomans and recognizing 100 years of Black History.

WHEREAS, 2026 marks the 100th year of celebrating Black History in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the first bill passed in the Oklahoma State Senate after Oklahoma's admission as a state was Senate Bill 1, requiring separate facilities for Black people in public transportation, education, and other public facilities. One hundred years later, the Legislature approved Senate Concurrent Resolution 49, repudiating Oklahoma's Jim Crow laws; and

WHEREAS, Black people sought opportunity in Oklahoma long before statehood, establishing 50 all-Black towns throughout Oklahoma and Indian Territory. Communities like Boley, Red Bird, and Langston became prominent and thriving towns with banks, businesses, and schools. Thirteen of those communities still exist today. Those

1 communities and other important locations were highlighted in the  
2 creation of the Oklahoma Civil Rights Trail, the result of  
3 bipartisan legislation approved in 2023; and

4 WHEREAS, the events of the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921 are  
5 believed to be the single worst incident of racial violence in  
6 American history. Long ignored and hidden, those events were  
7 brought to light when, in 1997, Representative Don Ross and Senator  
8 Maxine Horner, both of Tulsa, championed legislation creating a  
9 commission which ultimately released a 200-page report containing an  
10 official history of the massacre. Today, the Greenwood Cultural  
11 Center and Greenwood Rising continue to tell that story, honoring  
12 the past and inspiring the future; and

13 WHEREAS, in 1897, the Oklahoma Territorial Legislature approved  
14 House Bill 151, creating what is now known as Langston University,  
15 providing Black students with an industrial and agricultural  
16 curriculum, a teacher's college, and a liberal arts curriculum.  
17 Prominent students included Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher, whose later  
18 efforts led to the desegregation of the University of Oklahoma  
19 College of Law; Nancy Randolph Davis, inspired by Sipuel Fisher,  
20 became the first Black student to attend what is now Oklahoma State  
21 University; Maxine Horner, one of the first two Black women to serve  
22 in the Oklahoma State Senate, the other being Vicki Miles-LaGrange;  
23 Bessie Coleman, the first woman of color in the United States to  
24 earn a pilot license; and many others; and

1 WHEREAS, cities throughout the state continue to draw attention  
2 to the contributions of Oklahomans during the Civil Rights Movement,  
3 including the recently dedicated Clara Luper National Sit-In Plaza  
4 in downtown Oklahoma City, located on the original site of the Katz  
5 Drug Store in Oklahoma City where Luper and members of the Oklahoma  
6 City NAACP Youth Council staged a nonviolent protest in 1958 to help  
7 bring an end to segregation. A Clara Luper Civil Rights Center is  
8 also planned in Oklahoma City; and

9 WHEREAS, throughout the state's history, Black Oklahomans have  
10 made significant contributions in politics, business, medicine,  
11 literature, music, and more, including Hannah Diggs Atkins, who was  
12 the first Black woman to serve in the Oklahoma House of  
13 Representatives and later served as Secretary of State under  
14 Governor Henry Bellmon, among many other accomplishments. J.C.  
15 Watts Jr., a former University of Oklahoma quarterback, served as  
16 the state's first Black United States Congressman. Prior to being  
17 elected to Congress, Watts was elected to the Corporation  
18 Commission, becoming the first Black Oklahoman to win statewide  
19 office. Green Currin was the first Black Oklahoman to serve in the  
20 Oklahoma Territorial Legislature in 1890, while A.C. Hamlin became  
21 the first Black Oklahoman elected to the Oklahoma Legislature in  
22 1908. E. Melvin Porter became the first Black man elected to the  
23 Oklahoma State Senate in 1964. Ralph Waldo Ellison was an American  
24 writer, critic, and scholar, best known for his novel Invisible Man,

1 and became the most widely known man of letters in America.  
2 Historian, educator, and author John Hope Franklin, best known for  
3 his seminal 1947 book From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African  
4 Americans, was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the  
5 highest U.S. civilian honor. Charlie Christian won acclaim as an  
6 American swing and jazz guitarist and was among the first electric  
7 guitarists, transforming electric guitar from a rhythm instrument  
8 into a leading solo instrument. Oklahoma's Leona Mitchell sang for  
9 18 seasons as a leading spinto soprano at the Metropolitan Opera in  
10 New York and performed for five U.S. presidents. Actress and  
11 producer Alfre Woodard has starred in film, television, and theater,  
12 winning multiple awards, including four Emmys, a Golden Globe, and  
13 three Screen Actors Guild Awards and was nominated for an Academy  
14 Award, a BAFTA, and two Grammy Awards. These are but a few of the  
15 many remarkable Black Oklahomans whose accomplishments have brought  
16 positive attention to their professions and to Oklahoma.

17 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE 2ND SESSION  
18 OF THE 60TH OKLAHOMA LEGISLATURE:

19 THAT the Oklahoma State Senate recognizes and celebrates  
20 February as Black History Month.

21 THAT the Oklahoma State Senate recognizes and applauds the  
22 contribution of Black Oklahomans in the Civil Rights Movement and  
23 efforts by communities and by the state to highlight those  
24 accomplishments for future generations, and honors the

accomplishments of Black Oklahomans who have been trailblazers in  
their fields, earning state and national recognition for their  
talent and dedication.

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