



HR0150

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The United States of America, for nearly 250 years following the colonization of Jamestown, Virginia, was built in large part from the work of an estimated 500,000 men and women of African origin brought to the new country, forced into labor and deprived of their liberty; and

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WHEREAS, The importation of these men and women into the United States continued until Congress outlawed the slave trade in March 1807, after which time slavery instead came to rely on those already enslaved and their descendants; and

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WHEREAS, By 1860, the United States slave population had grown to number almost 4 million, accounting for more than 12% of the country's entire population; and

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WHEREAS, Slavery, which President Abraham Lincoln called a "monstrous injustice", imposed harsh and inhumane conditions on slaves who were unable to escape, running directly counter to the American ideals of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness expressed in the Declaration of Independence; and

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WHEREAS, The national debate over slavery, which had begun with the United States Constitutional Convention and continued as new territory was added, included divisive decisions such as

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1 the Missouri Compromise in 1820 and the Kansas-Nebraska Act in
2 1854; it came to a head with the 1860 presidential election of
3 Abraham Lincoln, who opposed expanding slavery into new
4 territories; and

5 WHEREAS, Within 3 months of President Lincoln's election, 7
6 southern states seceded from the Union, forming the Confederate
7 States of America and setting the country on a course for civil
8 war; following the first shot of the Civil War upon the federal
9 outpost of Fort Sumter off the coast of Charleston, South
10 Carolina on April 12, 1861, 4 more southern states and border
11 states seceded from the Union and joined the Confederate States
12 of America; and

13 WHEREAS, In the midst of the Civil War on January 1, 1863,
14 President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation,
15 granting freedom to all slaves in areas of the Confederacy not
16 already under Union control, which enabled Union soldiers to
17 enforce emancipation as they advanced into the Confederacy,
18 freeing many American slaves; and

19 WHEREAS, A number of freed slaves, whether by means of
20 emancipation or by means of escape, immediately enlisted in the
21 Union Army to continue fighting for the freedom of all slaves;
22 and

1 WHEREAS, On January 11, 1864, United States Senator John B.
2 Henderson of Missouri submitted a joint resolution for a
3 constitutional amendment abolishing slavery, with the U.S.
4 Senate passing the resolution on April 8, 1864 and the U.S.
5 House of Representatives passing it on January 31, 1865; and

6 WHEREAS, Illinois was the first state to ratify the
7 Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution on
8 February 1, 1865; and

9 WHEREAS, With Georgia's ratification on December 6, 1865,
10 the Thirteenth Amendment was ratified by three-fourths of the
11 states, and on December 18, 1865, Secretary of State William H.
12 Seward proclaimed it to be valid as a part of the Constitution;
13 and

14 WHEREAS, As the New York World stated on December 19, 1865,
15 "The proclamation of Secretary Seward, published yesterday,
16 making the official declaration required by law that the
17 Constitutional amendment had been ratified by the requisite
18 three fourths of the States, takes out of politics, and
19 consigns to history, an institution incongruous with justice,
20 and repugnant to the human sentiments fostered by Christian
21 civilization"; and

22 WHEREAS, The Thirteenth Amendment freed all remaining

1 slaves within the United States, which by that time numbered at
2 least 40,000; and

3 WHEREAS, Though the fight for civil rights had only just
4 begun, the Thirteenth Amendment marked an important turning
5 point in American history and in recognizing the equality of
6 all; therefore, be it

7 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
8 NINETY-NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we
9 recognize the 150th anniversary of the Thirteenth Amendment on
10 December 6, 2015; and be it further

11 RESOLVED, That the State of Illinois honors all individuals
12 involved in the fight against slavery, especially those who
13 gave their lives in support of the enduring legacy of freedom
14 enshrined in the Thirteenth Amendment.