

2015-J677

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating the 25th Anniversary of the release of Nelson Mandela from Victor Verster Prison on February 11, 1990

WHEREAS, Nelson Mandela was born at Qunu, near Umtata on July 18, 1918; his father was a chief councilor to Thembuland's acting chief, David Dalindyebo; when his father died, Nelson was groomed to become chief of his local tribe, however, he would never be able to make this commitment; and

WHEREAS, While at University, Nelson Mandela became increasingly aware of the unjust nature of South African Society; the majority of Black South Africans had little opportunities either economic or political; much to the disappointment of his family, Nelson became involved in politics, and along with his good friend and comrade, Oliver Tambo, was expelled from Fort Hare for organizing a student strike; and

WHEREAS, However, Nelson Mandela was able to finish his degree and qualified as a lawyer; in 1952, Nelson and Oliver opened the first Black law firm in South Africa; the Transvaal Law Society tried to have it closed down, but was blocked by the South African Supreme Court; and

WHEREAS, By the late 1950s, the South African state had become increasingly repressive, making it more difficult for Nelson Mandela's African National Congress to operate; he was forced to resign from the African National Congress and work underground; from 1956-1961, there was an extremely lengthy "Treason Trial" in which Nelson and several others were charged with treason; conducting their own defense, they eventually proved to be victorious; and

WHEREAS, However, in 1960, the Sharpeville Massacre of 63 Black South Africans changed the whole political climate; South Africa was increasingly isolated on the international scene and the government banned the African National Congress; this led Nelson Mandela to advocate armed

struggle through the Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK); and

WHEREAS, By 1962, Nelson Mandela had been arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment in the notorious Robben Island prison; life at the prison was tough and uncompromising; in his autobiography he reveals how he sought to make the best use of his time there; he helped to keep other men's spirits high and never compromised his political principles when offered early release; towards the end of his imprisonment his treatment improved as the South African establishment increasingly looked to negotiation, in the face of international isolation; and

WHEREAS, Nelson Mandela spent 27 1/2 years imprisoned until an international movement directed by exiled African National Congress leader Oliver Tambo led to his release; many countries imposed sanctions on the South African Government to pressure it to dissolve the oppressive institution of apartheid; and

WHEREAS, Upon Nelson Mandela's release, his first official visit to the United States began with a stop in central Brooklyn on June 21, 1990; and

WHEREAS, The NYPD estimated that 100,000 Brooklynites greeted Nelson Mandela's motorcade which passed through the neighborhoods of East New York and Fort Green; and

WHEREAS, When Nelson Mandela was freed by President Frederik Willem de Klerk, he began the onerous task of negotiating reforms which would lead to South Africa's first democratic elections with universal suffrage; and

WHEREAS, In 1993, Nelson Mandela was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize jointly with F.W. De Klerk; and

WHEREAS, On April 27, 1994, Nelson Mandela was elected the nation's first Black President; he served one five-year term presiding over the

transition from minority rule and apartheid; his advocacy of reconciliation led to international acclaim and importantly the trust of the White African population; despite the initial euphoria of winning the

election, the African National Congress faced a difficult challenge to improve the lives of the Black population; now, therefore, be it RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the release of Nelson Mandela from Victor Verster Prison on February 11, 1990.