

2015-J4194

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION, commending the Buffalo Soldiers Association of West Point, New York, upon the occasion of hosting its An Evening To Remember Black Tie Gala

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to commemorate significant events which represent turning points in our unique history and which are indelibly etched in the saga of our great Nation; and

WHEREAS, It is also the intent of this Legislative Body to honor those African American members of our military who have served in times of active conflict, as well as those who have served in times of peace; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to commend the Buffalo Soldiers Association of West Point, New York, upon the occasion of hosting its An Evening To Remember Black Tie Gala in support of the erection of a monument to memorialize the brave Buffalo Soldiers who served at West Point, to be celebrated on Saturday, March 19, 2016, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Suffern, New York; and

WHEREAS, The Buffalo Soldiers Association of West Point is a nonprofit organization which strives to acknowledge, honor, promote, and preserve the history and contributions of Buffalo Soldiers and other African American personnel who have served in the military of the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, Throughout the era of the Indian Wars, approximately 20 percent of the United States Army Cavalry troopers were Black; these soldiers fought in over 177 engagements, and their combat prowess, bravery, tenaciousness, and appearance on the battlefield, inspired the Native Americans to call them "Buffalo Soldiers"; and

WHEREAS, The Buffalo Soldiers of the United States Army were comprised of former slaves, freemen and Black Civil War veterans; they were the first African American units to serve during peacetime, and were respon-

sible for escorting settlers, cattle herds, and railroad crews on their journeys across the Western United States; and

WHEREAS, During America's western expansion, Buffalo Soldiers were tasked with the duties of enforcement and protection of settlers, which led to various encounters with Native Americans tribes; their honorable and heroic actions in diplomacy and battle earned them respect from the Native Americans, as well as their unique moniker; and

WHEREAS, After the completion of the era of Western Expansion, Buffalo Soldiers had been awarded at least 18 Medals of Honor; they also continued to boldly serve in numerous future military campaigns, including the Spanish American War, Philippine Insurrection, Mexican Expedition, World War I, World War II, and the Korean Police Action; and

WHEREAS, In 1962, Jackie Gaines and Alpheus Jones, retired members of the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiment Buffalo Soldiers at West Point, began to host annual memorial events to honor the legacy of the Buffalo Soldiers and to celebrate the contributions of African American veterans in the Hudson Valley Region of New York State; and

WHEREAS, Over the years, these annual events memorializing the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments Buffalo Soldiers of West Point grew in size and became a popular celebration of history within the community; and

WHEREAS, In 1973, Colonel Floyd McAfee placed a "Memorial Rock" at the intersection of Thayer Road and Mills Road as a marker for the Black Horse Cavalry Detachments which served at West Point from 1907 to 1946; this marker helped bring greater public recognition, and highlighted the unique contributions of the 9th and 10th Buffalo Soldiers Regiments of West Point; and

WHEREAS, Since the 1990s, the color guard from the United States Military Academy Military Police Company together with buglers from the

school's band have provided support for the Buffalo Soldiers' Memorial Service and Reunion, which concludes with a 21-gun salute; and

WHEREAS, Established in 2008, the Buffalo Soldiers Association of West

Point was founded by Retired Staff Sergeant Sanders H. Matthews, a former West Point Buffalo Soldier, with a vision of expanding the Buffalo Soldiers Memorial event, increasing educational programs, and enhancing the awareness of the contributions and experiences of soldiers and veterans in the Hudson Valley region; and

WHEREAS, In 2010, the last living commander of the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments of the Buffalo Soldiers at West Point, Thomas John Nazzaro, established an educational scholarship at Norwich University which is awarded annually to lineal descendants of the units' veterans; and

WHEREAS, In addition, members of the National Association of Buffalo Soldiers and Troopers Motorcycle Club, Northeast Frontier, began to attend the Buffalo Soldiers wreath laying ceremony at the "Memorial Rock" in 2011, and a local chapter at West Point was created two years later; and

WHEREAS, Moreover, President Barack Obama visited Buffalo Soldiers Lewis Coffield and Sanders H. Matthews Sr. in 2014, at Stewart Air National Guard Base in Newburgh, New York; and

WHEREAS, Today, the Buffalo Soldiers Association of West Point continues to host annual commemorative events in order to educate the public, honor and celebrate our Nation's military personnel, and create initiatives which preserve the legacy of the Buffalo Soldiers; and

WHEREAS, Much has changed since the days of the Buffalo Soldiers, including the integration of all military servicemen and women, but the story of these remarkable units continue to be one of unsurpassed courage and patriotism, and will forever remain a significant part of the history of our nation; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body that those organizations which give positive definition to the distinguished history and indomitable spirit of the communities of the State of New York, do so profoundly strengthen our shared commitment to the exercise of freedom; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to

commend the Buffalo Soldiers Association of West Point, New York, upon the occasion of hosting its An Evening To Remember Black Tie Gala; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the Buffalo Soldiers Association of West Point.

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