

2015-J6340

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commending the Tuskegee Airmen upon their 75th Anniversary and dedication to the United States Army in times of peace and war

WHEREAS, Members of the Armed Services from the State of New York, who have served so valiantly and honorably in wars in which this country's freedom was at stake, as well as in the preservation of peace in peacetime, deserve a special salute from this Legislative Body; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to commend the Tuskegee Airmen upon their 75th Anniversary and dedication to the United States Army in times of peace and war; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to welcome four members of the Tuskegee Airmen to the State of New York; these brave soldiers include: Audley Coulthurst, William Johnson, Herbert C. Thorpe, and Wilfred R. DeFour; and

WHEREAS, The Tuskegee Airmen were the first group of African American military pilots to serve with distinction in war as the 332nd Fighter Group of the U.S. Army Air Corps; and

WHEREAS, The Tuskegee Airmen, also known as the Red Tails, were established during World War II; America was going through a period of civil rights justice movements during the time and with a push from the NAACP the Air Force instituted a training program for African American pilots; and

WHEREAS, These men were extremely qualified for the positions; despite the belief that African Americans were not intelligent or skillful, expectations and requirements of these men were the same as for the previous men who passed through the Tuskegee Academy; and

WHEREAS, The Red Tails were a group of determined, dedicated men who came from all over the country to prove their worthiness of being a part

of the United States Air Force; those who were qualified mentally and physically were accepted to be trained as aviation cadets for single and twin engine planes as well as navigators and bomb-raiders; they were also trained in other areas that allowed for them to fully function in the Army Air Corps flying squadron and ground support crew; and WHEREAS, The first group of African American cadets to complete training formed the 99th Pursuit Squadron, a Fighter squad, in March of 1941; this squadron was extremely well-known for not allowing any of their bomber planes to be shot down by enemy fighter planes; even more impressively, the Red Tails flew at least 200 missions over Europe and Africa; during these missions not only were the Red Tails able to defend the Army bombers, they were also responsible for shooting down and damaging other enemy planes; and

WHEREAS, Greatly recognized for their accomplishments, the Tuskegee Airmen were awarded 14 Bronze Stars, 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses and 744 Air Medals as well as several Silver Stars; the Tuskegee Airmen also received the Distinguished Unit Citation for a mission flown in Germany responsible for bombing the Daimler-Benz factory in Berlin; among these distinctions the Tuskegee Airmen were also responsible for destroying numerous trucks, trains and fuel dumps, flying over 1,500 missions by the end of World War II; and

WHEREAS, The Tuskegee Airmen were also powerful in making strides to fight racism in America; the military was not fully integrated until 1948; World War II was over and there was enough foundation laid by the Red Tails to fully integrate the Armed Forces; the fight was not over after the war, though, and the Tuskegee Airmen gave African Americans the inspiration to change their lives at home; those who had enlisted in the Army returned home looking for jobs that were more in line with the

work they completed while in the service instead of going back to farm work; African Americans still had trouble finding new work but the Airmen's accomplishments were the start America needed; now, therefore,

be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commend the Tuskegee Airmen upon their 75th Anniversary and dedication to the United States Army in times of peace and war; and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the aforementioned Tuskegee Airmen.