

By the Committee on Commerce and Tourism; and Senators Campbell and Rodriguez

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## Senate Memorial

A memorial to the Congress of the United States, urging Congress to recognize January 1 as "Haitian Independence Day," the month of May as "Haitian American Heritage Month," May 18 as "Haitian Flag Day," and the month of June as "Caribbean American Heritage Month."

WHEREAS, the United States of America has thrived as a country of immigrants, united by common values and the promise of a better tomorrow, and

WHEREAS, the Republic of Haiti, an island nation located in the West Indies on the western third of the Island of Hispaniola, declared its independence from French colonial rule on January 1, 1804, following a slave revolt under the leadership of Generals Toussaint L'Ouverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, and Alexandre Pétion, becoming the first and only nation created from a successful slave rebellion, and

WHEREAS, Haiti was the first independent nation in Latin America and the first postcolonial independent nation led by blacks in the world, and

WHEREAS, as educators, authors, community leaders, activists, athletes, artists, musicians, and politicians, Haitian Americans have made their mark in every facet of society and have contributed to the betterment and diversity of this nation, and

WHEREAS, the close proximity of Haiti to American shores, in conjunction with our common bond of mutual values and commitment to democracy, ensures lasting comity of nations and

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30 continued trade and diplomatic relations, and

31 WHEREAS, an estimated 1.5 million persons of Haitian  
32 descent now live throughout this nation, and

33 WHEREAS, the United States and Haiti share a history of  
34 freedom, a common belief in human rights, and diverse, complex,  
35 and resilient peoples who have impacted the world through  
36 vibrant cultures, democracy, and a wealth of talent and  
37 achievement, and

38 WHEREAS, Haitian Independence Day is globally acknowledged  
39 and annually celebrated on January 1 as an affirmation of  
40 equality, freedom, and the abolition of slavery, and

41 WHEREAS, Congresswoman Frederica S. Wilson and Congressman  
42 Kendrick B. Meek, having acknowledged the importance of Haitian  
43 Americans in this nation's history and diversity, have proposed  
44 resolutions in the United States House of Representatives to  
45 recognize the month of May as "Haitian American Heritage Month"  
46 in the United States, and

47 WHEREAS, Haitian American Heritage Month is held to salute  
48 the Haitian and Haitian American communities and to exhibit  
49 appreciation for their culture and heritage, which have  
50 immeasurably enriched the lives of the people of this nation,  
51 and

52 WHEREAS, the Haitian flag known today, a variant of which  
53 first came into use in 1806, is emblazoned with the country's  
54 coat of arms and the colors red and blue, adopted from the flag  
55 of France, the country from which Haiti gained its independence,  
56 and

57 WHEREAS, General Jean-Jacques Dessalines is regarded as the  
58 father of the Haitian flag, known to have dramatically cut the

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59 French tricolor with his saber at the May 1803 Congress of  
60 Arcahaie, ripping away the white of the French flag to symbolize  
61 an end to European influence and leaving two strips that  
62 Catherine Flon then sewed back together: the blue, which  
63 represented the former African slaves brought to Haiti by  
64 colonial powers, and the red, which symbolized a people of mixed  
65 ancestry, and

66 WHEREAS, the Haitian flag is a definitive symbol of pride  
67 for the Caribbean nation, having become the second republic,  
68 after the United States, to defeat a European colonial power in  
69 the Americas, and

70 WHEREAS, Haitian Flag Day events are annually observed and  
71 celebrated with pride and enthusiasm throughout the United  
72 States, and

73 WHEREAS, from a region that conjures images of a scenic  
74 paradise, Caribbean Americans are as vibrant as the islands from  
75 which they come, possessing a wealth of talent and history that  
76 reverberates throughout this great state and nation, and

77 WHEREAS, emigration from the Caribbean region to the  
78 American colonies began as early as 1619, with the arrival of  
79 indentured workers in Jamestown, Virginia, and since 1820,  
80 millions of people have emigrated from the Caribbean region to  
81 the United States, and

82 WHEREAS, as educators, authors, community leaders and  
83 activists, musicians, and politicians, Caribbean Americans have  
84 made their mark on every facet of our society and have  
85 contributed to the betterment and diversity of our state and  
86 nation, and

87 WHEREAS, counted among the many famous sons and daughters

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88 of the Caribbean are activist W. E. B. Du Bois; Secretary of the  
89 Treasury Alexander Hamilton; the first African American  
90 Secretary of State, Colin Powell; actress Cicely Tyson; actor  
91 Sidney Poitier, the first African American actor to receive the  
92 Academy Award for Best Actor in a Leading Role; author, poet,  
93 and civil rights activist James Weldon Johnson; musician, actor,  
94 and activist Harry Belafonte; athlete Roberto Clemente, the  
95 first Latino inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame;  
96 and numerous others who have displayed great strength and  
97 resiliency while serving as pioneers among the people of the  
98 Caribbean, and

99 WHEREAS, the modern political influences of Caribbean  
100 Americans are evident in the election of a former member of the  
101 Florida House of Representatives, Jennifer Carroll of Trinidad  
102 and Tobago, as Florida's first Caribbean American Lieutenant  
103 Governor; the election of former Maryland Lieutenant Governor  
104 Anthony G. Brown, who is of Jamaican descent; and the continued  
105 representation in local, state, and national governments by  
106 members from the Bahamas, the Cayman Islands, Haiti, Jamaica,  
107 and other Caribbean nations, and

108 WHEREAS, in June 2005, the United States House of  
109 Representatives unanimously adopted a concurrent resolution  
110 recognizing the significance of Caribbean people and their  
111 descendants in the history and culture of the United States and  
112 observing the month of June as "Caribbean American Heritage  
113 Month," and

114 WHEREAS, on February 14, 2006, the United States Senate  
115 unanimously passed the resolution, culminating a two-year  
116 bicameral effort, and

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117 WHEREAS, since the passage of the resolution in 2005, the  
118 White House has issued an annual proclamation recognizing June  
119 as "Caribbean American Heritage Month," exemplifying the  
120 importance of this observance across the nation, NOW, THEREFORE,  
121

122 Be It Resolved by the Legislature of the State of Florida:  
123

124 That the Congress of the United States is urged to  
125 recognize January 1 as "Haitian Independence Day," the month of  
126 May as "Haitian American Heritage Month," May 18 as "Haitian  
127 Flag Day," and the month of June as "Caribbean American Heritage  
128 Month."

129 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of State is  
130 directed to dispatch copies of this memorial to the President of  
131 the United States, to the President of the United States Senate,  
132 to the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives,  
133 and to each member of the Florida delegation to the United  
134 States Congress.