

HM 933

2017

## 1 House Memorial

2 A memorial to the Congress of the United States,  
3 urging Congress to annually recognize January 1 as  
4 "Haitian Independence Day," May 18 as "Haitian Flag  
5 Day," and the month of May as "Haitian Heritage  
6 Month."

7  
8 WHEREAS, the Republic of Haiti, an island nation located in  
9 the West Indies on the western third of the Island of  
10 Hispaniola, declared its independence from French colonial rule  
11 on January 1, 1804, following a slave revolt under the  
12 leadership of Generals Toussaint L'Ouverture, Jean-Jacques  
13 Dessalines, and Alexandre Pétion, becoming the first and only  
14 state created from a successful slave rebellion, and

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

18 WHEREAS, Haitian Independence Day is globally acknowledged  
19 and annually celebrated on January 1 as an affirmation of  
20 equality, freedom, and the abolition of slavery, and

21 WHEREAS, the Haitian flag known today, a variant of which  
22 first came into use in 1806, is emblazoned with the country's  
23 coat of arms and the colors red and blue, adopted from the flag  
24 of France, the country from which Haiti gained its independence,  
25 and

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26 WHEREAS, General Jean-Jacques Dessalines is regarded as the  
27 father of the Haitian flag, known to have dramatically cut the  
28 French tricolor with his saber at the May 1803 Congress of  
29 Arcahaie, ripping away the white of the French flag to symbolize  
30 an end to European influence and leaving two strips that  
31 Catherine Flon then sewed back together: the blue, which  
32 represented the former African slaves brought to Haiti by  
33 colonial powers, and the red, which symbolized a people of mixed  
34 ancestry, and

35 WHEREAS, the Haitian flag is a definitive symbol of pride  
36 for the Caribbean nation, having become the second republic,  
37 after the United States, to defeat a European colonial power in  
38 the Americas, and

39 WHEREAS, Haitian Flag Day events are annually observed and  
40 celebrated with pride and enthusiasm throughout the United  
41 States, and

42 WHEREAS, Haitian Heritage Month is a jubilant celebration  
43 in the United States, embracing Haitian heritage and culture,  
44 and

45 WHEREAS, first celebrated in Boston, Massachusetts, in  
46 1998, Haitian Heritage Month is observed nationwide in the month  
47 of May from Florida to New York with parades, festivals, and  
48 school activities, and

49 WHEREAS, the importance of Haitian Heritage Month is  
50 exemplified by South Florida Congressman Kendrick B. Meek's

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51 introduction of a bill in the United States House of  
52 Representatives in 2004 and 2006 to recognize the month of May  
53 as Haitian Heritage Month; by former President George W. Bush  
54 and First Lady Laura Bush's letter, sent in May 2005, to  
55 congratulate the Haitian-American community on the occasion of  
56 the heritage month; and by the organization of a celebration at  
57 the White House that same year, and

58 WHEREAS, as educators, authors, community leaders,  
59 activists, athletes, artists, musicians, and politicians,  
60 Haitians and Haitian Americans have left an indelible mark on  
61 every facet of this nation's society and the world, evidenced by  
62 the accomplishments of such icons as Jean Baptiste Point du  
63 Sable, founder of the City of Chicago; civil rights activist  
64 W.E.B. Du Bois; National Football League player Pierre Garçon;  
65 author and candidate for the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2009  
66 Frankétienne; and Tony Award-winning actress and singer Nikki M.  
67 James, and

68 WHEREAS, the close proximity of Haitian and American  
69 shores, in conjunction with our countries' common bond of mutual  
70 values and commitment to democracy, ensures lasting comity of  
71 nations and continued trade and diplomatic relations, and

72 WHEREAS, with an estimated 1.5 million persons of Haitian  
73 descent now residing in the United States, it is important to  
74 acknowledge the positive impact of Haitian Americans in their  
75 contribution to the betterment and diversity of this country,

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76 | and

77 |       WHEREAS, the United States and Haiti share a history of  
 78 | freedom, a common belief in human rights, and diverse, complex,  
 79 | and resilient peoples who have impacted the world through  
 80 | vibrant cultures, democracy, and a wealth of talent and  
 81 | achievement, and

82 |       WHEREAS, Haitian Independence Day, Haitian Flag Day, and  
 83 | Haitian Heritage Month are each observed to salute the Haitian  
 84 | and Haitian-American communities and to exhibit appreciation for  
 85 | their culture and heritage, which have immeasurably enriched the  
 86 | lives of the people of this nation, NOW, THEREFORE,

87 |  
 88 | Be It Resolved by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

89 |  
 90 |       That the Congress of the United States is urged to  
 91 | recognize January 1 of each year as "Haitian Independence Day,"  
 92 | May 18 of each year as "Haitian Flag Day," and the month of May  
 93 | of each year as "Haitian Heritage Month" and to encourage the  
 94 | people of the United States to observe these occasions with  
 95 | appropriate ceremonies, celebrations, and activities.

96 |       BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of State is  
 97 | directed to dispatch copies of this memorial to the President of  
 98 | the United States, to the President of the United States Senate,  
 99 | to the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives,

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100 | and to each member of the Florida delegation to the United  
101 | States Congress.