

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation

WHEREAS, It is the sense 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, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation; and

WHEREAS, On January 1, 1863, Abraham Lincoln presided over the annual White House New Year's reception; late that afternoon, he retired to his study to sign the Emancipation Proclamation; and

WHEREAS, The Emancipation Proclamation arose from many causes and was the work of many individuals; it began at the outset of the Civil War, when slaves sought refuge behind Union lines, and did not end until December 1865, with the ratification of the 13th Amendment, which irrevocably abolished slavery throughout the nation; and

WHEREAS, A crucial turning point in history, the Emancipation Proclamation embodied a double emancipation: for the slaves, since it ensured that if the Union emerged victorious, slavery would perish, and for Abraham Lincoln himself, for whom it marked the abandonment of his previous assumptions about how to abolish slavery and the role blacks would play in post-emancipation American life; and

WHEREAS, The Emancipation Proclamation marked a dramatic transformation in the nature of the Civil War and in Abraham Lincoln's own approach to the problem of slavery, as no longer did he seek the consent of slave holders; and

WHEREAS, Within the Emancipation Proclamation, Abraham Lincoln addressed blacks directly, not as property subject to the will of others, but as men and women whose loyalty the Union must earn; and

WHEREAS, For the first time, Abraham Lincoln welcomed black soldiers into the Union Army; over the next two years some 200,000 black men would serve in the Army and Navy, playing a critical role in achieving Union victory; and

WHEREAS, Abraham Lincoln also urged freed slaves to go to work for reasonable wages in the United States; and

WHEREAS, From the first days of the Civil War, slaves had acted to secure their own liberty; the Emancipation Proclamation confirmed their insistence that the war for the Union must become a war for freedom; and

WHEREAS, The Emancipation Proclamation added moral force to the Union cause and strengthened the Union both militarily and politically; as a milestone along the road to slavery's final destruction, the Emancipation Proclamation has assumed a place among the great documents of human freedom; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation.