



Travis County Commissioners Court Voting Session Agenda Request

Meeting Date: February 18, 2020

Agenda Language:

Approve proclamation recognizing the month of February 2020 as Black History Month in partnership with the Austin Independent School District.

Prepared By/Phone Number: Deone Wilhite 512-854-9111

Elected/Appointed Official or Department Head: Commissioner Jeffrey W. Travillion Sr., Precinct 1

Commissioners Court Sponsor(s): Commissioner Jeffrey W. Travillion, Precinct 1,

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Background/Summary of Request and Attachments:

The Austin Independent School District (AISD) will sponsor its 37th Annual African American Heritage Celebration with the theme: "Equity and Excellence for All Students" and honor those who have made positive contributions to AISD and Travis County communities on Sunday, February 23, 2020 at 3:00pm at the AISD Performing Arts Center.

Staff Recommendations:

N/A

Issues and Opportunities:

N/A

Fiscal Impact and Source of Funding:

N/A

Required Authorizations:

Jeffrey W. Travillion Sr., Commissioner, Precinct 1

AGENDA REQUEST & BACKUP MATERIALS DEADLINE: Agenda requests and backup materials must be submitted in PDF format via email to agenda@traviscountytx.gov by **12 noon on Tuesday** in order to be considered for inclusion in the following week's voting session.

Travis County Commissioners Court



Proclamation

WHEREAS, Each February, Travis County and the Austin Independent School District proudly recognize “Black History Month” by proclaiming that African American history is also American history, and we proudly highlight notable African Americans and events that have shaped American history and contributed to American culture; and

WHEREAS, Black History Month, begun by historian Carter G. Woodson in February 1926 as “Negro History Week”, hoped to raise awareness of African American contributions to the nation and to the world. He also founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, now known as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), who has requested that Black History Month 2020 focus on African Americans and the vote; and

WHEREAS, There has been an ongoing effort on the part of both African American men and African American women to obtain and preserve the right to vote and have full citizenship rights in the United States. For example, more than a half-million African American men became voters in the South during the 1870s (women did not secure the right to vote in the United States until 1920); and

WHEREAS, The most basic right of a citizen in a democracy is the right to vote, and without this right people can easily be ignored and even abused by their government. Unfortunately, this is what happened to African American citizens after Reconstruction. Despite the 14th and 15th amendments guaranteeing the civil rights of African Americans, their right to vote was systematically and brutally taken away. By the end of the era of Reconstruction in 1877, the U.S. Supreme Court, in a series of decisions, had eviscerated many of the laws that had been given African Americans, including the right to vote; and

WHEREAS, With federal troops no longer present to protect the rights of African American citizens, the oppression of African Americans quickly returned in the old Confederate states, as African American voting fell off sharply because of threats by employers and terroristic violence from the Ku Klux Klan. Poll taxes, grandfather clauses, whites-only primaries, vouchers of “good character”, literacy tests, death threats, and brutal violence were just some of the methods that were used to keep African Americans from the voting booth; and

WHEREAS, While some of these laws were eventually struck down, it took years for African Americans to regain the basic right to vote. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited unequal application of voter registration requirements and also in 1964, the 24th Amendment to

the U.S. Constitution was ratified, abolishing poll taxes in federal elections, and;

WHEREAS, Even though President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Voting Rights Act of 1965, a federal law that banned racial discrimination in voting nationwide and banned a literacy test, even today there are still too many African Americans and women who are not registered voters or choose not to vote if registered; and

WHEREAS, All freedom-loving Americans must remain vigilant on the issue of voting rights because there are still those who, if they could, would change the laws and enact new regulations to make it more difficult for African Americans and others to vote; and

WHEREAS, The Government of Travis County and the Austin Independent School District value the history, heritage, and culture of our African American citizens, and we celebrate the right of all citizens to vote, and salute the African American elected officials, school district officials, department heads, and employees who have served to improve access and resources in Travis County for all residents, and;

WHEREAS, This year, the Austin Independent School District (AISD) will sponsor its 37th Annual African American Heritage Celebration with the theme *“Equity and Excellence For All Students”* and honor those who have made positive contributions to the AISD and Travis County communities on Sunday, February 23, 2020 at 3:00pm at the AISD Performing Arts Center.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED that we, the Travis County Commissioners Court, do hereby proclaim the month of February 2020 as:

“BLACK HISTORY MONTH”

In Travis County, Texas and urge all public officials and all citizens of Travis County to raise awareness and celebrate the contributions of African Americans and urge all to participate in the Austin Independent School District celebration in appreciation of African American History.

Signed and entered this 18th day of February 2020.

Sarah Eckhardt
County Judge

Jeffrey W. Travillion, Sr.
Commissioner, Precinct 1

Brigid Shea
Commissioner, Precinct 2

Gerald Daugherty
Commissioner, Precinct 3

Margaret J. Gómez
Commissioner, Precinct 4