



THE AMERICAN LEGION
Department of Maryland
Legislative Commission

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STATEMENT IN SUPPORT FOR SENATE BILL 0020
GENERAL PROVISIONS – COMMEMORATIVE DAYS –TUSKEGEE AIRMEN COMMEMORATION
DAY

February 27, 2020

Chairman Pensky and Honored members of the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee. Senate Bill 20 offers a tremendous benefit to our State's history and its legacy in racial relations.

The Tuskegee Airmen, the first African American soldiers to enter flight school so named for their training location in Tuskegee, Alabama flew over 15,000 sorties during World War II earning the group over 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses. Their heroics set a pathway to full intergration of the military through an Executive Order by President Harry S. Truman in 1948 and fully implemented by General Mark Clark in 1952 during the height of the Korean Conflict.

The leader of the squadron was [later] General Daniel "Chappie" James Jr. who became the first four-star African American General in the Armed Forces.

Many of this famed group have been either Maryland residents or currently live here in our state. The East Coast Chapter Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. annually awards tuition assistance to financially deprived graduating high school and college students and contribute \$20,000 each year to scholarships for aviation classes.

In closing, the Tuskegee Airmen have been enshrined in film, literature and even by the U. S. Postal service via a postage stamp. These men of valor were award Congressional Gold Medal by President George W. Bush in 2007. With all those accolades and tributes The American Legion wonders why the fourth Tuesday in March honoring the Tuskegee Airmen is not a holiday already, and respectfully asks for a favorable report on Senate Bill 20.

Yours, Respectfully

Patrick J. Guibao
Legislative Director

