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Position: FAV



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: Senate Bill 5 – General Provisions – Commemorative Days – Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day

SPONSOR: Senators Patterson, Ellis, and Carozza

HEARING DATE: March 10, 2022

COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 5 – General Provisions – Commemorative Days – Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day**, which would proclaim the fourth Thursday in March as Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day. This action urges informative programs and activities to observe the Tuskegee Airmen.

The Tuskegee Airmen were America's first group of African American and Caribbean-born military pilots who fought in World War II. In response to pressure from African American leaders, civil rights groups, and community advocates, the American Air Corps trained a group of almost 1,000 cadets under certain conditions at Tuskegee Institute. During a time heightened with segregation, discrimination, and prejudice stacked against African Americans, these individuals successfully completed the training program to become the first African American military pilots (and approximately 14,000 African American individuals were trained as navigators, bombardiers, and other support personnel).

The Tuskegee Airman brought attention to African Americans in North American military conflicts and proved that African Americans did not, in fact, have limited intellectual capacity, aptitude, and skills. Instead, these Airmen were the first African American soldiers to complete training under the American Army Core leading to desegregation in the military and civil rights advocacy during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s.

The Prince George's County's Office of Human Rights (OHR), encourages the growth and development of Prince George's County to promote equal opportunity for all individuals. Similarly, the OHR acknowledges and appreciates individuals who

sacrificed their time, efforts, and lives to ensure that discrimination is opposed. To further highlight and recognize the contributions of the Tuskegee Airmen, the OHR supports the proclamation of a Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day to highlight the history-making efforts of the Tuskegee Airmen.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 5** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.

MD State Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Edward Harbison

Position: FAV

Distinguished members, my name is Edward Harbison. I served honorably in the United States Air Force, retiring in December of 2000 after over 23 years. In my 12th year of service—at 30 years of age, I learned of a travesty that was rectified after over 30 years—that the first Army Air Corps Ariel Gunnery Competition—now known as Top Gun; was won by an all Black unit – Members of the Tuskegee Experience, called Tuskegee Airmen. These men and women, black and white, a part of our Greatest Generation, sacrificed and persevered; opened doors so others like myself could serve this great nation, equally! Not only did they perform their duties and tasks, they achieved objectives when situations were created intentionally so that they would fail. These great Americans need to be recognized for their unsung effect on the United States of America. Let's not diminish their accomplishments like the 1st place trophy; won by an all-African American unit in 1949, hidden and hoped to be forgotten! Maryland needs to make the 4th Thursday in March, Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day! After fighting oppression abroad; they returned home to fight racism, bigotry and prejudice practices inside their, our, home borders. Still becoming doctors, teachers, pharmacists, lawyers, politicians, and great model citizens. If not now, when? If not you, who? You have the power to pass this legislation. Now is the time. You are the right persons. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Edward Harbison
Master Sergeant, United State Air Force, Retired
Deacon, Little Forest Baptist Church

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Uploaded by: Jerry Burton

Position: FAV

Honorable members of the Maryland Senate, we thank you all for your invitation to make a presentation “in favor” of a Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day in the State of Maryland. I am Jerry Burton, National President of Tuskegee Airmen Incorporated.

We, the Tuskegee Airmen Incorporated members, family, and friends come to you humbly and excited to request your support and passage of Senate Bill 0005, and to adopt the resolution for a permanent TUSKEGEE AIRMEN COMMEMORATION DAY in the State of Maryland, on every fourth Thursday in March moving forward. We are a non-profit 501(C)3 organization, chartered in Washington, DC in 1973 by original Tuskegee Airmen and concerned area residents for the opportunities and education of minority and disadvantaged youth. The charter remains fully intact as it was written forty-nine years ago in May, 1973. Many Tuskegee Airmen settled in the counties of Maryland and continued to make an indelible mark on their Maryland communities. Example - Dr. Henry A. Wise and Charles H. Flowers; both have schools named in their honor in Prince Georges County, William Broadwater – the Department of Transportation/FAA, Leroy ‘Boots’ Battle (Douglass Jr/Sr HS) Band Teacher/Leader, Dr. Cyril O. Byron – Morgan State quarterback/Coppin State Educator, Lemuel A. Lewie – Carver VoTech, Edward J. Talbert – Administrator/DC Librarian, Dr. Ivan Ware – Howard University Reserve Officer Training Corp (ROTC) architect. I of course will not omit long time resident of Montgomery County Brigadier General (retired) Charles E. McGee; who was a veteran of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam and recently received the honor of having the Silver Spring Library renamed in his honor.

Why do we view the month of March so significant?

- 22 March 1941: The 99th Pursuit Squadron was activated at Chanute Field, Illinois under the command of Captain Harold R. Maddux, a white officer, but composed of African-American officers and enlisted men.
- 7 March 1942: The first class of five (5) African-American pilots completed training and received their wings.
- 24 March 1945: The 332nd Fighter Group took part in the longest World War II raid of the Fifteenth Air Force. Along with other fighter groups of the Fifteenth Air Force, it escorted B-17 bombers of the 5th Bomb Wing on a mission to Berlin, the German capital. On the way the Tuskegee Airmen encountered German Jet Me-262 fighters and shot down three of them. The three victors (in the order of kills) were: 1st Lt. Earl R. Lane, 2nd Lt. Charles V. Brantley, and 1st Lt. Roscoe C. Brown, all of whom belonged to the 100th Fighter Squadron. For this mission, the 332nd Fighter Group earned its only Distinguished Unit Citation of World War II. The group's 99th Fighter Squadron earned its third Distinguished Unit Citation for this mission.

The battle in the United States for equality was as fierce.

- 21 March 1944: Back at Selfridge Field, Michigan, 2nd Lt. Milton R. Henry of the 553rd Fighter Squadron, with African American pilots preparing to replace those overseas, was charged with a series of court martial offenses, including

being absent without leave, disrespect of superior officers, and failure to report for duty. Most of the incidents occurred earlier that same month. Back in early January, Henry had attempted to enter the officers' club at Selfridge Field, since he was an officer. Colonel Boyd, the base commander, had ordered him to leave, and he complied then. The January incident was not directly connected with his court martial trial.

- There was also an attempt of 101 Black Officers – Pilots and Instructors - to enter an Officer's Club at Freeman Field, Indiana. They were all arrested, 98 were issued Letters of Reprimand, and three were court martialed. Final disposition of all 101 Officers was complete exoneration and clearing of the personnel records since the arrests were illegal.

The true history and incredible accomplishments of the Tuskegee Airmen are still being recorded eighty one years after the first class of black maintenance officers graduated classes at Chanute Field in Rantoul, Illinois. Tuskegee Airmen Incorporated continues sharing the true history of the Tuskegee Airmen with all adults and young people which we come in contact. With all we seem to have on our side, why do we believe it is necessary at this time to have a TUSKEGGE AIRMEN COMMEMORATION DAY?

1. The Tuskegee Airmen should be commemorated and celebrated in the State of Maryland long after the last Tuskegee Airman has passed away and joined the "Lonely Eagle Chapter".

2. The annual Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day would provide greater opportunities for all concerned organizations and partners to promote activities to benefit youth in the State of Maryland.
3. The State of Maryland would recognize and appreciate the importance of keeping the Tuskegee Airmen legacy alive and provide continued support of statewide events highlighting their exploits of WW II and the accomplishments after settling in the State of Maryland.
4. The acceptance of this proposal in the State of Maryland will join the Arizona, Colorado, Commonwealth of Virginia, and the District of Columbia who have adopted the same proposal, with eventual acceptance on a National scale.

I would like to close my remarks as I opened and thank you all for this invitation and for the opportunity to request your support and adoption of Senate Bill 0005 - Tuskegee Airman Commemoration Day every fourth Thursday in March.

Thank You

Jerry Burton, President
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Uploaded by: Joseph Pruden

Position: FAV



THE AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT OF MARYLAND, INC.



Room E
101 N. Gay Street
Baltimore, MD 21202

March 10, 2022

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 5
General Provisions - Commemorative Days - Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day

Chairman Pinsky and members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee,

During World War II at least 20 young African-American men left their homes in Maryland and became members of what is now known as the Tuskegee Airmen.

They distinguished themselves in every way possible while fighting for America, for themselves, their children, their culture, as well as every American citizen, in hope that their country would accept Americans of all colors as first class citizens.

Upon returning from the war, many more made their homes in the State of Maryland.

We have now lost two of Maryland's most notable Tuskegee Airmen. Brigadier General Charles McGee, USAF-Ret., one of the last living members of this unit, was a highly decorated combat veteran of three wars. Dr. Charles Herbert Flowers became the first African American with military training to become a primary flight instructor of the Tuskegee Airmen during WWII.

Their passings bring to mind the extraordinary service and sacrifice of these American heroes and Sons of Maryland from World War II's 'Greatest Generation'.

Our American Legion Department of Maryland Family spans more than 100,000 households, who live, pay taxes and vote in the State of Maryland. They reside in all of the 23 counties and Baltimore City.

The American Legion Department of Maryland and its membership respectfully and strongly requests a favorable report on SB 5.

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph D. Pruden, Jr.
Legislative Commission
Department of Maryland
The American Legion

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Support SB 5 Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day.pdf

Uploaded by: Linnie Girdner

Position: FAV

Dear Members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

I am a resident of District 21 and a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice Annapolis and Anne Arundel County.

I am requesting that you support **SB0005 General Provisions – Commemorative Days – Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day**, a bipartisan supported bill that would make the fourth Thursday in March a day to celebrate and remember some of our local heroes who fought racism at home and fascism abroad.

The Tuskegee Airmen were the first African Americans allowed to train as aviators and support personnel in the US Army Air Corps. During the 1940s, “the Tuskegee Institute trained nearly 1,000 pilots and 14,000 navigators, bombardiers, instructors, aircraft and engine mechanics, control tower operators and other maintenance and support staff” (history.com). They faced discrimination from segregation and Jim Crow laws, flew second-hand planes, and were sent on scouting missions that they weren’t expected to return from. Despite these challenges, they excelled at escorting bomber air crafts during WWII, with the lowest loss rate of all fighter groups. Proving that African Americans have the aptitude and leadership as military pilots paved the way for desegregation of the US armed forces in 1948.

Did you know that Maryland is home to several Tuskegee Airmen?

[Airman Brigadier General Charles McGee from Bethesda, MD](#) served in the US Air Force for 30 years. He is recognized in the National Aviation Hall of Fame for his 409 aerial fighter combat missions over the span of three wars. He was an invited speaker to an overflow crowd at the Odenton Public Library in Anne Arundel County a few years ago. The Silver Spring Library was recently named after him. He died at 102 years old in January. Who will tell his story now?

[Second Lieutenant Leroy Battle of Harwood, MD](#) was a jazz musician with double degrees in education and music who later went on to work for Prince George's County Public Schools as a teacher, band director, guidance counselor and vice principal. In 1945, he and 100 other airmen participated in a nonviolent action to integrate an officer’s club that later inspired civil rights activists in the 1950s and 60s ([Evans](#)).

Another notable Marylander is [Willam Broadwater of Upper Marlboro, MD](#). He trained as a military pilot but the war ended before he could go overseas. After that he applied to a major commercial airline and scored the highest grade on the entrance test. The airline

insisted that there must be a problem with the test and required him to take it over again. The second time he scored the second highest grade,

“A company representative visited Mr. Broadwater at home. “He said the company could never hire a black pilot because . . . no one would fly if they knew there was a black pilot,” Mr. Broadwater’s son said. “My dad told him, half jokingly, that they would never have to know because he would just stay in the cockpit. The guy from the airline didn’t think that was funny.” ([Lester](#)).

Mr. Broadwater went on to work for the FAA as an air traffic controller and senior administrator. He helped found the nonprofit Tuskegee Airmen Inc. which provides scholarships and grants for youth seeking careers in aviation and aerospace.

Other local Tuskegee Airmen:

- [Dr Cyril Byron of Randallstown, MD](#) served as a crewman maintaining the airplanes. He later became a Baltimore college professor and coach. He was also the first African-American referee in Division I East Coast football.
- [Charles H. Toogood of Northeast Baltimore, MD](#), a retired machinist and decorated World War II combat pilot, who was wounded in the line of duty.

These stories deserve to be told to those who will never get a chance to meet these brave men. These are stories of Maryland and of America. Let’s commemorate these them and many others whose memory still inspires and serves to empower boys and girls and men and women today. For these reasons I am encouraging you to vote **in SUPPORT of SB0005.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Linda Girdner
941 Fall Ridge Way
Gambrills, MD 21054

Signature Page (01-13-2021).pdf

Uploaded by: Patrick Guibao

Position: FAV

Member Organizations, Maryland Military Coalition


Air Force Sergeants Association


American Military Society


Association of the United States Navy


Commissioned Officers Association of the
US Public Health Service



Disabled American Veterans


Distinguished Flying Cross Association



Fleet Reserve Association


Jewish War Veterans of the USA


Maryland Air National Guard Retirees'
Association


Military Officers Association of America


Military Order of the Purple Heart


National Association for Black Veterans


Naval Enlisted Reserve Association


NOAA Association of Commissioned Officers


Society of Military Widows


Veterans of Foreign Wars