ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION No. 206

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JANUARY 27, 2021

Sponsored by: Assemblyman PARKER SPACE District 24 (Morris, Sussex and Warren)

Co-Sponsored by: Assemblyman Wirths and Assemblywoman Dunn

SYNOPSIS

Designates July 18 of each year "Sergeant William Harvey Carney Day" in New Jersey.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/3/2021)

1	A JOINT RESOLUTION designating July 18 of each year as
2	"Sergeant William Harvey Carney Day" in New Jersey.
3	
4	WHEREAS, William Harvey Carney was born into slavery on February
5	29, 1840 in Virginia, but was granted freedom after his father, who
6	had escaped through the Underground Railroad, was able to buy his
7	family's freedom and move them all to Massachusetts; and
8	WHEREAS, Wishing to fight in the American Civil War, Mr. Carney
9	joined the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry in 1863; and
10	WHEREAS, The 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry was one of the
11	first African-American regiments in the United States Army during
12	the Civil War and was the first official unit made up of black
13	enlisted men to fight for the Union; and
14	WHEREAS, Though initially promised the same rate of pay as their
15	white counterparts in other regiments, the soldiers of the 54th
16	Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry were paid markedly less and this
17	injustice was only corrected when Congress passed a bill to
18	equalize pay for black Union soldiers on June 15, 1864; and
19	WHEREAS, During the July 18, 1863 attack on Fort Wagner in South
20	Carolina, with the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry leading
21	the attack in their first major combat mission, Mr. Carney witnessed
22	his unit's color guard shot and killed; and
23	WHEREAS, Upon seeing the color guard fall, Mr. Carney grasped the
24	flag, led the way to the parapet, and planted the colors until the 54th
25	Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry was forced to fall back, but even
26	then he continued to carry the flag leading him to become severely
27	wounded; and
28	WHEREAS, Despite his severe wounds, Mr. Carney guarded the
29	symbol of America with his life and kept it flying high throughout
30	the battle, refusing to relinquish it to anyone other than a fellow
31	54th solider upon return to the Union barracks; and
32	WHEREAS, Despite their contributions to the Union war efforts, with
33	the bravery and valor of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry
34 25	noted to have convinced many politicians and Army officers of the
35	value of black soldiers and prompting the further enlistment of
36	black soldiers, the regiment faced discrimination from their
37	inception; and
38	WHEREAS, In recognition of his bravery, Mr. Carney was promoted to
39 40	the rank of sergeant and was awarded a Congressional Medal of
40	Honor in 1900; and
41	WHEREAS, Mr. Carney was not only one of the few recipients to earn
42 43	a Congressional Medal of Honor while fighting on American soil, but was also the first African American to be awarded this honor:
43 44	but was also the first African-American to be awarded this honor;
44 45	and WHEREAS , The bravery of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry,
43 46	along with its individual soldiers like Mr. Carney, have been
40 47	immortalized in various mediums, including the song "Boys the
48	Old Flag Never Touched the Ground" and the 1989 film <i>Glory</i> ; and
4ð	One riag never rouched the Ground and the 1989 film Glory; and

AJR206 SPACE

3

1 WHEREAS, The bravery of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry 2 and William Harvey Carney should be memorialized by a day that 3 recognizes their triumphs not only on the battlefield, but also over 4 racial discrimination and biases; now, therefore, 5 6 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate and General Assembly of the 7 State of New Jersey: 8 9 1. July 18 of each year shall be designated as "Sergeant 10 William Harvey Carney Day" in New Jersey to recognize and 11 commemorate the heroic actions of William Harvey Carney the first 12 black soldier to earn the Medal of Honor. 13 14 2. The Governor is respectfully requested to issue a 15 proclamation calling upon public officials and the citizens of this 16 State to observe "Sergeant William Harvey Carney Day" with 17 appropriate activities and programs each year. 18 19 3. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately. 20 21 22 **STATEMENT** 23 24 This resolution designates July 18 of each year as "Sergeant 25 William Harvey Carney Day" in New Jersey. 26 William Harvey Carney was born into slavery on February 29, 1840 in Virginia, but was granted freedom after his father, who had 27 escaped through the Underground Railroad, was able to buy his 28 29 family's freedom and move them all to Massachusetts. Upon the 30 outbreak of the American Civil War, Mr. Carney joined the 54th 31 Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry in 1863, which was one of the 32 first African-American regiments in the United States organized 33 during the Civil War and was the first official black unit recruited 34 to fight for the Union. 35 During the July 18, 1863 attack on Fort Wagner in South Carolina, with the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry leading 36 37 the attack in their first major combat mission, Mr. Carney witnessed his unit's color guard shot and killed. Upon seeing this, Mr. Carney 38 39 grasped the flag, led the way to the parapet, and planted the colors 40 until the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry was forced to fall 41 back, but even then he continued to carry the flag leading him to 42 become severely wounded. Despite his severe wounds, Mr. Carney 43 guarded the symbol of a united America with his life and kept it 44 flying high throughout the battle, refusing to relinquish it to anyone 45 other than a fellow 54th solider upon return to the Union barracks. 46 Despite their contributions to the Union war efforts, with the 47 bravery and valor of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry 48 noted to have convinced many politicians and Army officers of the

AJR206 SPACE 4

1 value of black soldiers and prompting the further enlistment of black soldiers, the regiment faced discrimination from their 2 3 inception. In recognition of his bravery, Mr. Carney was promoted 4 to the rank of sergeant and was awarded a Congressional Medal of 5 Honor in 1900. Mr. Carney was not only one of the few recipients to earn a Congressional Medal of Honor while fighting on 6 American soil, but was also the first African-American to be 7 8 awarded this honor.

9 The bravery of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, along 10 with its individual soldiers like Mr. Carney, have been immortalized 11 in various mediums, including the song "Boys the Old Flag Never 12 Touched the Ground" and the 1989 film *Glory*. The bravery of the 13 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry and Mr. Carney should be 14 memorialized by a day that recognizes their triumphs not only on 15 the battlefield, but also over racial discrimination and biases.