

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON**

**PROCLAMATION NO. \_\_\_\_\_**

**Proclaiming February 2014 as Black History Month in Multnomah County, Oregon.**

**The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Finds:**

- a. Black History Month is observed in the United States to celebrate and recognize the vital role of African Americans in our history and culture. Though the first Negro History Week was celebrated in 1926, it wasn't until 1976 that Black History Month was celebrated during the full month of February.
- b. Though the Emancipation Proclamation declared "that all persons held as slaves are, and henceforward shall be free," many states continued to create and enforce laws that disenfranchised African Americans and other minority groups. Methods such as poll taxes, vouchers of "good character", literacy tests and disqualification for "crimes of moral turpitude" were crafted to exclude black citizens from voting.
- c. Designed to stop the methods to disenfranchise African Americans, The Voting Rights Act was signed into law on August 6, 1965. According to the United States Department of Justice, "As the Supreme Court put it in its 1966 decision upholding the constitutionality of the Act: Congress had found that case-by-case litigation was inadequate to combat wide-spread and persistent discrimination in voting, because of the inordinate amount of time and energy required to overcome the obstructionist tactics invariably encountered in these lawsuits."
- d. According to the United States Department of Justice, "When Congress enacted the Voting Rights Act of 1965, it determined that racial discrimination in voting had been more prevalent in certain areas of the country. Section 4(a) of the Act established a formula to identify those areas and to provide for more stringent remedies where appropriate...The second was the requirement for review, under Section 5, of any change affecting voting made by a covered area either by the United States District Court for the District of Columbia or by the Attorney General."
- e. On June 25, 2013, the Supreme Court struck down Section 4 of the act in *Shelby County v. Holder* by a vote of five to four. In the majority opinion, Roberts wrote, "The tests and devices that blocked ballot access have been forbidden nationwide for over 40 years. Yet the Act has not eased §5's restrictions or narrowed the scope of §4's coverage formula along the way...Section 4's formula is unconstitutional in light of current conditions."

- f. Since the *Shelby County v. Holder* ruling, the majority of states previously subject to preclearance have implemented restrictions on voter rights: Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia have implemented various measures such as photo-I.D. requirements, shorter early-voting periods, an end to same-day registration, voter role purges and other methods to limit voter access.
- g. Despite this ruling, In the State of Oregon and Multnomah County, we value the integrity of the voter role and provide citizens every opportunity to exercise their right to vote. The County recognizes the importance of voting rights for the African American community because it's critical to their representation in the policy forums that impact services and resource delivery.

**The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Proclaims:**

The month of February 2014 is Black History Month in Multnomah County, Oregon.

**ADOPTED this 20th day of February, 2014.**

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON**

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Marissa Madrigal, Chair

REVIEWED:  
JENNY M. MADKOUR, COUNTY ATTORNEY  
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

By \_\_\_\_\_  
Jacquie Weber, Deputy County Attorney

**SUBMITTED BY:** Commissioner Loretta Smith, District 2