

1 HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 18

2 BY FORD, MILLER, and BERRY

3 A Resolution recognizing the significant achievements  
4 of the Tuskegee Airmen during World War II and the  
5 involvement of Iowans in those achievements and  
6 expressing appreciation on behalf of the citizens  
7 of this state.

8 WHEREAS, even with the World War I record of  
9 accomplishment by the graduate black U.S. Army  
10 officers of Fort Des Moines' 17th Provisional Training  
11 Regiment, racist beliefs persisted within the  
12 military, as shown by an Army War College study in  
13 1925 that concluded that "blacks lacked intelligence  
14 and were cowardly under combat conditions"; and

15 WHEREAS, in spite of the prevalence of racism in  
16 this country at the time, the first training facility  
17 for black combat pilots was implemented at Moton  
18 Field, Tuskegee, Alabama, from 1941-1945; and

19 WHEREAS, of the 992 graduate airmen who became the  
20 99th Fighter Squadron, 332nd Fighter Group, and 477th  
21 Composite (Bomber) Group, 450 saw combat during World  
22 War II, including 200 escort missions without losing a  
23 bomber to enemy fighter planes; however, 66 airmen  
24 lost their lives in combat or accidents; and

25 WHEREAS, Iowa had 12 graduate airmen, including  
26 several of the most notable and a number of others who  
27 trained but were "washed out", often for unjust  
28 reasons; and

29 WHEREAS, Iowa's initial connection to the airmen  
30 was the design of Moton Field at Tuskegee by prominent

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1 black engineer, Archie Alexander, who was a native of  
2 Ottumwa and a graduate of the University of Iowa; and

3       WHEREAS, the War Department's civilian pilot  
4 training program refused to admit black pilots until  
5 licensed pilot and Howard University student Yancy  
6 Williams filed suit forcing the Army Air Corps  
7 Department to admit blacks to the pilot training  
8 program, and in spite of its location in the racially  
9 segregated deep south, Tuskegee Institute was selected  
10 as the site for the training at Moton Field; and

11       WHEREAS, in April 1943, when the 99th Fighter  
12 Squadron deployed to North Africa where allied troops  
13 were battling German and Italian forces in the desert  
14 and assumed the Red Tail as their unit color  
15 designation, Iowans Maurice Esters, Joseph Gomer, and  
16 Luther Smith were part of the first deployment and the  
17 "Red Tail Angels" quickly earned a reputation for  
18 ferocity in air combat; and

19       WHEREAS, between 1943 and 1945, the Tuskegee Airmen  
20 flew 15,533 sorties over North Africa, Italy,  
21 Yugoslavia, and Germany, and in addition to the 200  
22 flawless bomber escort missions, the airmen destroyed  
23 or damaged 409 enemy aircraft and ground targets and  
24 sank a German destroyer, and the six Iowans who  
25 experienced combat flew over 400 combat missions and  
26 won numerous decorations; and

27       WHEREAS, although a half-century has passed, little  
28 recognition has been made of the Tuskegee Airmen's  
29 perseverance and sacrifice through an incredibly  
30 difficult period in American history, and of how these

1 individuals have continued to contribute to the growth  
2 of the nation in careers as physicians, engineers,  
3 educators, and a variety of other distinguished  
4 professions; NOW THEREFORE,

5 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
6 That the House of Representatives recognizes the  
7 extraordinary achievements of the Iowans who served as  
8 Tuskegee Airmen, as representative of all who served  
9 as Tuskegee Airmen, and expresses the grateful  
10 appreciation of the citizens of this state for that  
11 service; and

12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Chief Clerk of the  
13 House of Representatives shall provide an official  
14 copy of this resolution to the Iowans who brought  
15 distinction to themselves and to this state by serving  
16 as Tuskegee Airmen.

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