

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 112

Commemorating the 100th anniversary of the The Souls of Black Folk by Dr. William Edward Burghardt Du Bois.

Agreed to by the Senate, January 29, 2004

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 6, 2004

WHEREAS, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (W.E.B. Du Bois), born February 23, 1868 in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, graduated cum laude from Harvard University in 1890, attended the University of Berlin in 1892, and was the first African American to receive a Ph.D. from Harvard University, is lauded as one of the greatest scholars in American history; and

WHEREAS, W.E.B. Du Bois, a towering figure, brilliant scholar, and prolific writer, taught at Wilberforce University in Ohio and the University of Pennsylvania, and established the first department of sociology in the United States at Atlanta University; and

WHEREAS, he was the author of many books and other writings, among them three major autobiographies, *The Philadelphia Negro* in 1896, *The Souls of Black Folk* in 1903, *John Brown* in 1909, *Black Reconstruction* in 1935, and *Black Folk, Then and Now* in 1939; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his literary activities and profound scholarship, he was a founding member of the Niagara Movement and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and editor of *The Crisis* magazine, the NAACP's primary publication; and

WHEREAS, his masterpiece, *The Souls of Black Folk*, is one of the most controversial books in print, and the book is his effort to show the humanity of African-American people by appealing to the audience's intellect through social science and common sense; and

WHEREAS, *The Souls of Black Folk* examines the complexities of the social issues that separate the races, describes the magnitude of American racism and demands an end to it, and captures the "double consciousness" of the African-American psyche, a condition that Dr. Du Bois described as "One ever feels this twoness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder"; and

WHEREAS, this groundbreaking treatise has endured due to the beauty of its lyrical, graceful prose, and Dr. Du Bois' ability to relate numerous truthful and attainable assessments about the African-American experience in America, particularly insight into the strange meaning of being Black in a society that views such persons with contempt; and

WHEREAS, *The Souls of Black Folk*, a complex literary work concerning the dilemma of race in America, offers a deeply compelling vision of the fate of African Americans in the United States, the meaning of emancipation and its effect, the failures of Reconstruction, and a prescient statement concerning the "color line" as the primary problem in race relations in the twentieth century; and

WHEREAS, this monumental literary work reflects the chasm between the views of African Americans and Whites on racial equality in America while attempting to lessen racial prejudice by showing the kinship between the soul of African Americans and the universality of humankind; and

WHEREAS, scholars from across the country gathered at Northwestern University in the fall of 2003 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of one of the most influential and widely read books in African-American and American letters; and

WHEREAS, W.E.B. Du Bois may best be honored on the 100th anniversary of his enduring contribution to African-American and American letters, *The Souls of Black Folk*, by encouraging teachers to include the book on student reading assignments, and by embracing its truths and meeting the challenge to create a society devoid of racial prejudice; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the 100th Anniversary of *The Souls of Black Folk* by Dr. William Edward Burghardt Du Bois be commemorated; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate transmit a copy of this resolution to the Secretary of Education, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Chairman and Executive Director of the State Council of Higher Education, the Chancellor of the Virginia Community College System, and the presidents of the Virginia Education Association, the Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and the Virginia Association of Teachers of English, requesting that they further disseminate copies of this resolution to their respective constituents so that they may be apprised of the sense of this body in this matter.