

2013-K1404

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating the observance of Nelson Mandela International Day in New York, July 18, 2014

WHEREAS, Mandela Day is a global initiative proposed by 46664 and the Nelson Mandela Foundation as a day to honor and celebrate former South African President Nelson Mandela and his legacy; and

WHEREAS, Mandela Day held on Nelson Mandela's birthday, July 18th, will be an opportunity for people around the world to take some time to make a contribution to the world around them; and

WHEREAS, The hope is that Mandela Day will serve as a global call to action for people to realize their individual power to make a difference, and to make an imprint; and

WHEREAS, To mark this day, a series of events will be held around the world to honor this great man who not only helped to topple the oppressive apartheid regime in South Africa, but helped to lead the world in speaking out about the HIV/AIDS pandemic and how we must all act to stop the spread of this disease; and

WHEREAS, New York City will be the center of this year's celebrations with a series of events featuring 46664 music, film and entertainment ambassadors; and

WHEREAS, Such a day can serve to bring people together from around the world to fight poverty and promote peace and reconciliation; this initiative is supported by people from all circles around the world to use this day as an opportunity for community work; and

WHEREAS, Nelson Mandela was born at Qunu, near Umtata on July 18, 1918; his father was chief councillor to Thembuland's acting chief, David Dalindyebo; when his father died, Mandela was groomed for becoming chief of his local tribe; however, he would never be able to make this commitment; and

WHEREAS, While at University, Nelson Mandela became increasingly aware of the unjust nature of South African Society; the majority of Black South Africans had little opportunities either economic or political; much to the disappointment of his family, Mandela became involved in politics, and along with his good friend and comrade, Oliver Tambo, was expelled from Fort Hare for organizing a student strike; and

WHEREAS, However, Nelson Mandela was able to finish his degree and qualified as a lawyer; in 1952, Nelson and Oliver opened the first Black law firm in South Africa; the Transvaal law Society tried to have it closed down, but was blocked by the South African Supreme Court; and

WHEREAS, In 1944, Nelson Mandela helped found the ANC Youth League, whose Programme of Action was adopted by the ANC in 1949; he was instrumental in pushing the ANC into more direct action such as the 1952 Defiance Campaign and later acts of sabotage; and

WHEREAS, By the late 1950s, the South African state had become increasingly repressive, making it more difficult for the ANC to operate; Nelson Mandela had to resign from the ANC and work underground; from 1956-1961, there was an extremely lengthy "Treason Trial" in which Nelson Mandela and several others were charged with treason; conducting their own defense, they eventually proved to be victorious; and

WHEREAS, Nelson Mandela noted in his autobiography the judiciary were one of the least repressive parts of the South African state and in theory, sought to follow the rule of law; and

WHEREAS, However, in 1960, the Sharpeville massacre of 63 Black South Africans changed the whole political climate; South Africa was increasingly isolated on the international scene and the government banned the ANC; this led Nelson Mandela to advocate armed struggle through the Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK); and

WHEREAS, By 1962, Nelson Mandela had been arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment in the notorious Robben Island prison; life at the prison was tough and uncompromising; in his autobiography he reveals how

he sought to make the best use of his time there; he helped to keep other men's spirits high and never compromised his political principles when offered early release; towards the end of his prison spell his treatment improved as the South African establishment increasingly looked to negotiation, in the face of international isolation; and

WHEREAS, Although negotiations were painfully slow and difficult, they eventually led to Nelson Mandela's release in 1990; it was an emotional moment watched by millions around the globe; and

WHEREAS, The next four years were also difficult as South African society suffered inter-cultural violence between ANC and Inkarta supporters, in addition to slow progress on a new constitution; and

WHEREAS, On May 10, 1994, Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as the first democratically elected State President of South Africa and was President until June of 1999; as President, Mandela presided over the transition from minority rule and apartheid; his advocacy of reconciliation led to international acclaim and importantly the trust of the White African population; despite the initial euphoria of winning the election, the ANC faced a difficult challenge to improve the lives of the black population; this was made more difficult by the HIV epidemic, which continues to cause grave problems; Nelson Mandela recently lost his eldest son to this disease and he has worked extremely hard to campaign on this issue; and

WHEREAS, Since retiring from office, Nelson Mandela continued to be an international figure of great stature; he was one of the few politicians who has gone beyond a political role; he is widely admired and has received many prestigious awards; Nelson Mandela is also associated with many educational programmes and initiatives such as Make Poverty History Campaign; and

WHEREAS, In 1993, Nelson Mandela was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize jointly with F.W. De Klerk; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the observance of Nelson Mandela International Day in New

York, July 18, 2014; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor of the State of New York.