

2017-J5794

Senate Resolution No. 5794

BY: Senator COMRIE

MEMORIALIZING Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim December 1, 2018, as Rosa Parks Day in the State of New York

WHEREAS, It is with sincere intent that this Legislative Body is moved to pay tribute to a woman of strong faith and commitment whose purposeful life and accomplishments will forever stand as an example and inspiration for others; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to give acclaim to individuals of great character whose lives exemplify the highest ideals of humanity; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to memorialize Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim December 1, 2018, as Rosa Parks Day in the State of New York, in conjunction with the observance of National Rosa Parks Day; and

WHEREAS, Rosa Parks, a Black seamstress whose refusal to relinquish her seat to a White man on a city bus in Montgomery, Alabama, on December 1, 1955, grew into a mythic event that helped touch off the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s; and

WHEREAS, For her act of defiance, Rosa Parks was arrested, convicted of violating the segregation laws and fined \$10, plus \$4 in court fees; in response, Blacks in Montgomery, Alabama, boycotted the buses for nearly 13 months while mounting a successful Supreme Court challenge to the Jim Crow law that enforced their second-class status on the public bus system; and

WHEREAS, The events that began on that bus in the winter of 1955 captivated the nation and transformed a 26-year-old preacher named Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. into a major civil rights leader; it was Dr. King, the new pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, who was drafted to head the Montgomery Improvement Association, the organization formed to direct the nascent civil rights struggle; and

WHEREAS, Rosa Parks' act of civil disobedience, which seems a simple gesture of defiance so many years later, was in fact a dangerous, even reckless move in 1950s Alabama; in refusing to move, she risked legal sanction and perhaps even physical harm, but she also set into motion something beyond the control of the city authorities; Mrs. Parks clarified for people far beyond Montgomery, Alabama, the cruelty and humiliation inherent in the laws and customs of segregation; and

WHEREAS, That moment on the Cleveland Avenue bus also turned a very private woman into a reluctant symbol and torchbearer in the quest for racial equality in a movement that became increasingly organized and sophisticated in making demands and getting results; and

WHEREAS, The truth, as Rosa Parks later explained, was that she was tired of being humiliated, of having to adapt to the byzantine rules, some codified as law and others passed on as tradition, that reinforced the position of Blacks as something less than full human beings; and

WHEREAS, A true civil rights icon, Rosa Parks died a little more than a month short of the 50th Anniversary of her courageous act which many view as the beginning of the civil rights movement; and

WHEREAS, Rosa Parks' pure legacy of quiet and peaceful rebellion against hatred will live on for many years to come; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim December 1, 2018, as Rosa Parks Day in the State of New York; 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.