



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 568

Resolution designating May 10 annually as National Pan-Hellenic Council Day in the City of New York to recognize the contributions made to social change by members of nine Black sororities and fraternities, known as the Divine Nine.

By Council Members Williams, Riley, Farías, Brooks-Powers, Rivera and Gennaro

Whereas, The National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) is the coordinating body of Black Greek-Letter Organizations of college-educated women and men committed to “community awareness and action through educational, economic, and cultural service activities”; and

Whereas, NPHC was founded on May 10, 1930, at Howard University by five chartering organizations-Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, and Omega Psi Phi Fraternity; and

Whereas, NPHC then added four more organizations to its membership-Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity and Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity in 1931, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority in 1937, and Iota Phi Theta Fraternity in 1997-later becoming known affectionately as the “Divine Nine”; and

Whereas, Each NPHC sorority and fraternity grew out of a time when Blacks were denied fundamental rights and when Black college students too often felt isolated by their race or social class on college campuses; and

Whereas, NPHC’s powerful motto “Until We Are All Free” made its purpose clear; and

Whereas, NPHC sororities and fraternities began to work together to create social programs that would bring about the social change that their members wanted to see for themselves, for their peers, for Blacks across the nation, and for the nation itself; and

Whereas, NPHC expects that, after graduation, members of its nine sororities and fraternities will join a graduate chapter and continue to be active in community work dedicated to positive social change wherever they live; and

Whereas, NPHC currently oversees 97 collegiate councils and 172 alumnae/alumni councils (including one for Greater New York) across 40 states and in other countries; and

Whereas, Members of NPHC sororities and fraternities have made significant contributions to the advancement of civil rights, including W.E.B. DuBois, Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, and Martin Luther King, Jr.; and

Whereas, Members of NPHC sororities and fraternities have made significant contributions in performing arts, including Ben Vereen, Ava DuVernay, Sheryl Lee Ralph, Wanda Sykes, and Phylicia Rashad; and

Whereas, Members of NPHC sororities and fraternities have made significant contributions in literature, including Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and Nikki Giovanni; and

Whereas, Members of NPHC sororities and fraternities have made significant contributions in government service, including Thurgood Marshall, Andrew Young, and Vice President Kamala Harris; and

Whereas, In speaking to a convention of her Alpha Kappa Alpha sorors in July 2022, Vice President Harris, a proud Howard University graduate, noted that the Divine Nine were “founded to create lasting bonds of community” and that all of the founders “were acutely aware we needed to build networks of support for young Black men and women who attend college in America”; and

Whereas, Vice President Harris, recalling a photograph of President Harry S. Truman from 1950, remarked that President Truman “was meeting with representatives from the National Pan-Hellenic Council, which included a member of our sorority, to talk about ending employment discrimination in America” and that “members of the Divine Nine have always made sure Black voices are in the rooms where decisions are being made...and [that] we will always fight for what our communities need and for the best of who we are as a

nation”; and

Whereas, Vice President Harris concluded her remarks by noting that “through our sisterhood, we teach that there is no barrier we cannot break and there is no obstacle we cannot overcome”; and

Whereas, Today, members of the Divine Nine continue a legacy of breaking barriers and overcoming obstacles in the service of social change; and

Whereas, Members of the Divine Nine in federal government service from New York City (NYC) include Brooklynites Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman elected to the United States House of Representatives (1969-1983), and Hakeem Jeffries, the first Black Minority Leader of the House of Representatives; and

Whereas, Members of the Divine Nine in local government service in NYC include Adrienne Adams, the first Black woman elected as the Speaker of the New York City Council, as well as other current and former Council members; and

Whereas, The designation of a day is fitting to commemorate the founding of the NPHC and the community work that is done by Divine Nine members in NYC and in communities across the nation; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York designates May 10 annually as National Pan-Hellenic Council Day in the City of New York to recognize the contributions made to social change by members of nine Black sororities and fraternities, known as the Divine Nine.

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3/20/23
RHP