

1 AN ACT relating to Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day.

2 WHEREAS, prior to World War II, African Americans had very limited  
3 opportunities in the defense of this nation, generally, with no roles in military aviation;  
4 and

5 WHEREAS, when the United States entered World War II, African Americans  
6 greatly desired more meaningful jobs in the military, including flying and maintaining  
7 military aircraft; and

8 WHEREAS, the rapid expansion of aircraft production during World War II created  
9 an urgent need for more trained military pilots; and

10 WHEREAS, the public outcry from the black population, black media, and fair-  
11 minded whites exhorted the War Department to extend the opportunity to fly airplanes to  
12 all members of the military; and

13 WHEREAS, the United States War Department's Civilian Pilot Training (CPT)  
14 program authorized colleges and universities to train students to fly, increasing the  
15 number of civilian pilots and strengthening the nation's military preparedness; and

16 WHEREAS, in 1941, Tuskegee Institute in Alabama was one of six black schools  
17 chosen to participate in the CPT program. Following the initiation of the program, the  
18 Tuskegee Institute was selected to offer advanced CPT training and ultimately was  
19 selected as the first site for segregated military flight training; and

20 WHEREAS, graduates of the CPT program at the Tuskegee Institute received their  
21 silver wings and became known as the Tuskegee Airmen and later became known by the  
22 German Air Force as the "Red Tail Devils"; and

23 WHEREAS, The Tuskegee Airmen overcame seemingly insurmountable odds in  
24 the form of pervasive racial and legal impediments during the World War II era in order  
25 to make their contributions as pilots, navigators, and bombardiers; and

26 WHEREAS, the courageous African-American pilots of the 99th Pursuit Squadron  
27 were recognized for their outstanding tactical air support and aerial combat before joining

1 with the 100th, 301st, and 302nd Squadrons in the world-renowned all-black 332nd  
2 Fighter Group; and

3 WHEREAS, the Tuskegee Airmen's success in escorting and defending bombers  
4 during World War II earned them one of the lowest loss records of all the escort fighter  
5 groups and resulted in a constant demand for their services by the allied bomber units  
6 flying dangerous missions deep into Germany and surrounding areas; and

7 WHEREAS, the achievements of the 99th Pursuit Squadron in combat include but  
8 are not limited to the destruction of 111 aircraft (in the air), 150 aircraft (on the ground),  
9 16 barges and boats, 58 box cars and other rolling stock, 57 locomotives, one radar  
10 installation, and two oil and ammunition dumps; and the squadron's awards include 150  
11 Distinguished Flying Crosses, eight Purple Hearts, 14 Bronze Stars, three Distinguished  
12 Unit Citations, and 744 Air Medals and Clusters; and

13 WHEREAS, March is a special month for Tuskegee Airmen, as many of their most  
14 notable accomplishments occurred in the month of March, including the first cadets  
15 receiving their wings; the first maintenance crew beginning training at Chanute Field,  
16 Illinois; the activation of the 99th Pursuit Squadron; and in 2007, President George W.  
17 Bush presenting the Tuskegee Airmen with the Congressional Gold Medal; and

18 WHEREAS, ten cadets from the original group of Tuskegee Airmen were born in  
19 Kentucky, and several others lived in, attended college in, or had other ties to Kentucky;

20 NOW, THEREFORE,

21 ***Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky:***

22 ➔SECTION 1. A NEW SECTION OF KRS CHAPTER 2 IS CREATED TO  
23 READ AS FOLLOWS:

24 ***The fourth Thursday in March of each year is designated as Tuskegee Airmen***  
25 ***Commemoration Day.***