
SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 12—SENATOR BROWER

MARCH 18, 2013

JOINT SPONSOR: ASSEMBLYMAN MUNFORD

Referred to Committee on Legislative Operations and Elections

SUMMARY—Urges the President of the United States to grant a posthumous pardon to John Arthur “Jack” Johnson. (BDR R-440)

FISCAL NOTE: Effect on Local Government: No.
Effect on the State: No.

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EXPLANATION – Matter in *bolded italics* is new; matter between brackets ~~omitted material~~ is material to be omitted.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION—Urging the President of the United States to grant a posthumous pardon to John Arthur “Jack” Johnson for the 1913 racially motivated conviction of Johnson, which diminished his athletic, cultural and historical significance and destroyed his reputation.

1 WHEREAS, John Arthur “Jack” Johnson was a flamboyant,
2 defiant and controversial figure in the history of the United States
3 who challenged racial biases; and

4 WHEREAS, Jack Johnson was born in Galveston, Texas, in 1878
5 to parents who were former slaves; and

6 WHEREAS, Jack Johnson became a professional boxer and
7 traveled throughout the United States, fighting white and African-
8 American heavyweights; and

9 WHEREAS, After being denied, on purely racial grounds, the
10 opportunity in this country to fight two white champions, in 1908,
11 Jack Johnson was granted an opportunity to fight the reigning white
12 title-holder, Tommy Burns, in Sydney, Australia; and

13 WHEREAS, Jack Johnson defeated Tommy Burns to become the
14 first African American to hold the title of Heavyweight Champion
15 of the World; and



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1 WHEREAS, The victory by Jack Johnson over Tommy Burns
2 prompted a search for a white boxer who could beat Jack Johnson, a
3 recruitment effort that was dubbed the search for the "Great White
4 Hope"; and

5 WHEREAS, In 1910, as part of that effort, former champion
6 named Jim Jeffries left retirement to fight Jack Johnson in Reno,
7 Nevada; and

8 WHEREAS, Jim Jeffries lost to Jack Johnson in front of a crowd
9 of 20,000 people, in what has been referred to by many as the
10 "Battle of the Century"; and

11 WHEREAS, The defeat of Jim Jeffries by Jack Johnson led to
12 rioting, aggression against African Americans and the racially
13 motivated murder of African Americans nationwide; and

14 WHEREAS, The relationships of Jack Johnson with white women
15 compounded the resentment felt toward him by many; and

16 WHEREAS, Between 1901 and 1910, 754 African Americans
17 were lynched, some for simply being "too familiar" with white
18 women; and

19 WHEREAS, In 1910, Congress passed the Act of June 25, 1910,
20 commonly known as the "White Slave Traffic Act" or the "Mann
21 Act," (18 U.S.C. §§ 2421 et seq.), which outlawed the transportation
22 of women in interstate or foreign commerce "for the purpose of
23 prostitution or debauchery, or for any other immoral purpose"; and

24 WHEREAS, In October 1912, Jack Johnson became involved
25 with a white woman, Lucille Cameron, whose mother disapproved
26 of their relationship and sought action from the Department of
27 Justice, claiming that Jack Johnson had abducted her daughter; and

28 WHEREAS, Jack Johnson was arrested by Federal marshals on
29 October 18, 1912, for transporting Lucille Cameron across state
30 lines for an "immoral purpose" in violation of the Mann Act; and

31 WHEREAS, The Mann Act charges against Jack Johnson were
32 dropped when Lucille Cameron refused to cooperate with Federal
33 authorities and then married Jack Johnson; and

34 WHEREAS, Federal authorities persisted and summoned a white
35 woman named Belle Schreiber, who testified that Jack Johnson had
36 transported her across state lines for the purpose of "prostitution and
37 debauchery"; and

38 WHEREAS, In 1913, Jack Johnson was convicted of violating the
39 Mann Act and sentenced to 1 year and 1 day in Federal prison; and

40 WHEREAS, Jack Johnson fled the United States to Canada and
41 various European and South American countries; and

42 WHEREAS, Jack Johnson lost the Heavyweight Championship
43 title to Jess Willard in Cuba in 1915; and



1 WHEREAS, Jack Johnson returned to the United States in July
2 1920, surrendered to authorities and served nearly a year in the
3 Federal penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kansas; and

4 WHEREAS, Jack Johnson subsequently fought in boxing
5 matches, but never regained the Heavyweight Championship title;
6 and

7 WHEREAS, Jack Johnson served his country during World War
8 II by encouraging citizens to buy war bonds and participating in
9 exhibition boxing matches to promote the war bond cause; and

10 WHEREAS, Jack Johnson died in an automobile accident in
11 1946; and

12 WHEREAS, In 1954, Jack Johnson was inducted into the Boxing
13 Hall of Fame; and

14 WHEREAS, Jack Johnson paved the way for African-American
15 athletes to participate and succeed in racially integrated professional
16 sports in the United States; and

17 WHEREAS, Jack Johnson was wronged by a racially motivated
18 conviction prompted by his success in the boxing ring and his
19 relationships with white women; and

20 WHEREAS, The criminal conviction of Jack Johnson unjustly
21 ruined his career and destroyed his reputation; now, therefore, be it

22 RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF
23 NEVADA, JOINTLY, That the members of the 77th Session of the
24 Nevada Legislature urge the President of the United States to grant a
25 posthumous pardon to John Arthur "Jack" Johnson to expunge from
26 the annals of American criminal justice a racially motivated abuse
27 of the prosecutorial authority of the Federal Government, and to
28 recognize Jack Johnson's athletic and cultural contributions to
29 society; and be it further

30 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit a copy of
31 this resolution to the President of the United States; and be it further

32 RESOLVED, That this resolution becomes effective upon
33 passage.

