

**MINUTES OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS**

**Eightieth Session
March 22, 2019**

The Senate Committee on Government Affairs was called to order by Chair David R. Parks at 1:17 p.m. on Friday, March 22, 2019, in Room 2149 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4412 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. [Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda. [Exhibit B](#) is the Attendance Roster. All exhibits are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator David R. Parks, Chair
Senator Julia Ratti
Senator Ben Kieckhefer
Senator Pete Goicoechea

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Senator Melanie Scheible, Vice Chair (Excused)

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Senator Dallas Harris, Senatorial District No. 11
Senator Pat Spearman, Senatorial District No. 1

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jennifer Ruedy, Committee Policy Analyst
Becky Archer, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jon Jon Everet, Southern Nevada Buffalo Soldiers
Kelly Hawthorne, Southern Nevada Buffalo Soldiers
Carla Stice, Southern Nevada Buffalo Soldiers
Arby Hambric, Buffalo Soldiers
Andrew LePeilbet, Military Order of the Purple Heart

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Tony Yarbrough, Veterans of Foreign Wars; United Veterans Legislative Council

CHAIR PARKS:

We have two bills to hear today and will open with Senate Bill (S.B.) 336.

SENATE BILL 336: Requires the Governor to annually proclaim Juneteenth Day as Buffalo Soldiers Day in the State of Nevada. (BDR 19-791)

SENATOR DALLAS HARRIS (Senatorial District No. 11):

I am here to introduce S.B. 336. This bill as proposed to be amended requires the Governor to annually proclaim July 28 as Buffalo Soldiers Day in Nevada to bring attention to the important contributions Buffalo Soldiers made to the State and the United States. An amendment has been submitted changing the date of observance from June 19 to July 28 ([Exhibit C](#)).

Who are the Buffalo Soldiers? You will see in the “Whereas” clauses of the bill who the Buffalo Soldiers are. Additionally, active chapters of Buffalo Soldiers exist throughout the Nation working to keep the memories of the sacrifices of these soldiers alive.

The Southern Nevada Chapter of Buffalo Soldiers has approximately 25 to 30 members.

As the bill states:

WHEREAS, On July 28, 1866, after the end of the Civil War, Congress enacted legislation that allowed African-American men to serve in six segregated units in the United States Army during peacetime; and

WHEREAS, These new units, which consisted of former slaves and African-American soldiers that fought in the Civil War, were the 9th and 10th Cavalry, and the 38th, 39th, 40th and 41st Infantry, which were later reorganized as the 24th and 25th Infantry; and

WHEREAS, These soldiers were nicknamed Buffalo Soldiers by the Native Americans against whom they fought because of their reputation for toughness and bravery in battle and the buffalo fur coats that they wore in the winter; and

WHEREAS, Throughout the era of the Indian Wars, Buffalo Soldiers were posted from Montana in the Northwest to Texas, New Mexico and Arizona in the Southwest, making up approximately 20 percent of the United States Cavalry troops; and

WHEREAS, Besides their impressive military contributions, the Buffalo Soldiers also had a significant role in the expansion of the West by escorting settlers, cattle herds and railroad crews, exploring and mapping vast areas of the Southwest and stringing hundreds of miles of telegraph lines; and

WHEREAS, The Buffalo Soldiers were some of the first park rangers in the national parks of the Sierra Nevada, where they protected the parks from illegal grazing, poaching, timber thieves and forest fires and helped build roads and trails in the parks for the enjoyment of all Americans; and

WHEREAS, Buffalo Soldiers also served courageously during World War I and World War II; and

WHEREAS, African-Americans have fought with distinction in all of this country's military engagements and 23 Buffalo Soldiers received the Congressional Medal of Honor, which is the highest military distinction awarded in the name of Congress to members of the armed forces for bravery and service; and

WHEREAS, It is important to honor the dedication and sacrifices of the Buffalo Soldiers, recognize the contributions that they have made to the State of Nevada and to the United States and preserve their legacy ...

Please let us do so today with this simple measure.

SENATOR PAT SPEARMAN (Senatorial District No. 1):

Senator Harris has covered the ground on this bill. Our American history is rich with contributions of many people and cultures. Recognizing the Buffalo Soldiers is something Nevadans should be proud to do because the Buffalo Soldiers are part of our great State. Buffalo Soldiers, as well as African Americans, have contributed to not just the history of this Country, but

many have given their lives in the course of freedom for this Country. I urge your support of this bill.

JON JON EVERET (Southern Nevada Buffalo Soldiers):

We have provided educational programs to the Clark County School District for several years. We also provide educational programs to the senior citizens in the area. We are a proud group of individuals who work hard. The majority of our members are retired military. This bill will help us.

KELLY HAWTHORNE (Southern Nevada Buffalo Soldiers):

I am honored to be a Buffalo Soldier. I served in our military for 14 years. I am pleased to share my experience with the youth as well as other people within our community. I am honored to share my heritage and pass on our rich history as Buffalo Soldiers with the community. I am proud and honored to continue this rich legacy if you pass this bill.

CARLA STICE (Southern Nevada Buffalo Soldiers):

I represent the females of the Southern Nevada Buffalo Soldiers. We enjoy teaching our legacy to children and adults. I learned a lot about my legacy through this group that I had not learned in school. The group likes to show young women that women are a productive part of the Buffalo Soldiers. There was a female Buffalo Soldier who most people did not know of. We would be grateful for a holiday to show Nevada our legacy and history. Black History Month is in February, but this bill provides an opportunity to bring in and teach more people about the Buffalo Soldiers. It gives something for people to look forward to that is good and prideful. We appreciate this opportunity.

ARBY HAMBRIC (Buffalo Soldiers):

I am honored to be here today. I am a World War II, Korean War and Vietnam War soldier. I was in the cotton fields for 16 years before being drafted into the Navy. I stood on the aircraft carrier USS Palau, CVE122, with former President Harry S. Truman in Norfolk, Virginia. As a little southerner from Texas, it was cold for me to stand out there for two-and-a-half hours, but I enjoyed that experience.

On behalf of the Buffalo Soldiers, I want to say something about Waddell Steven. He and I both served in the military during the same time as

the first African-American master diver, Carl Brashear. Waddell Steven was present at the commissioning of the ship USNS Carl Brashear.

In 1946, after the commissioning of the USS Palau in Tacoma, Washington, I was sent to Norfolk, Virginia. I was also in Norfolk, Virginia, when the USS Missouri went aground. It took a while to raise the ship. The USS Missouri is now in Pearl Harbor and is a museum. Please visit it next time you are in Pearl Harbor.

I am an author of the book, *To Thee I See*. It is not to make a living but to help kids get through college debt-free. I have this set up through the Arby L. Hambric Scholarship at the Armed Forces Bank in Nellis Air Force Base. I am there often to sign books.

When I was initiated to be one of the Buffalo Soldiers, Waddell Steven and I were initiated at the same time. Mr. Steven had on his helmet. I was proud and thankful to see him. I had never seen him before, and I have only seen him once since then. Senator Spearman was one of the speakers at a Buffalo Soldier's event in October and Waddell Steven was present. I was sitting at the table with him. It was an honor.

In 1947, I was aboard the USS Palau and assigned as one of the assistants to take care of two black senior officers who were aboard the ship. The senior officers were Brigadier General Benjamin O. Davis and his son, Colonel Benjamin O. Davis Jr. As I said in my book, the Colonel is one of the most handsome black men I ever walked behind as I was taking him to the flight deck or elsewhere. The ship took them to Monrovia and Liberia at the time of the hundredth year celebration in Liberia.

I ask for your help, especially with the Buffalo Soldiers. We need some young men to come in and teach before the old men die.

CHAIR PARKS:

July 28 is probably the hottest day of the year. Are any special events being planned to celebrate Buffalo Soldiers Day?

SENATOR HARRIS:

Not at this moment, but if this bill passes, I will organize it myself.

In closing, you got a small glimpse of how important Buffalo Soldiers are to a lot of people in our community. Take that with you as you vote on this bill.

SENATOR SPEARMAN:

I echo Senator Harris's remarks. Mr. Hambric brought it home by making the connection between the past and the present. This is another way we can ensure future generations understand the contributions of the Buffalo Soldiers.

CHAIR PARKS:

We will close the hearing on S.B. 336 and open the hearing on S.B. 331.

SENATE BILL 331: Designates the new Interstate Highway No. 11 as the Purple Heart Highway. (BDR S-78)

SENATOR PAT SPEARMAN (Senatorial District No. 1):

I am here to present S.B. 331. This bill designates the new Interstate Highway No. 11 (I-11) as the Purple Heart Highway.

As background, the Purple Heart Medal is specifically a combat decoration and our Nation's oldest military medal. It was first created by George Washington in 1782 as the Badge of Military Merit to recognize meritorious service.

The Purple Heart Medal is now awarded to members of the armed forces of the United States who have either been wounded or killed as a result of any opposing armed force, an international terrorist attack or a result of military operations while serving as part of a peacekeeping force.

The purpose of S.B. 331 is to designate I-11 as the Purple Heart Highway. The interstate highway is currently under construction in Nevada and Arizona and will link Las Vegas and Phoenix, two of the largest cities in the Country that are not connected by an interstate highway.

Nevada gave more than a few hundred military members in the cause of freedom. As motorists travel on this highway in Nevada, it will pay tribute to the men and women who have been awarded the Purple Heart medal and create a visual reminder to those who use the road that others have paid a high price for their freedom to live and travel in a free society.

This bill does two things; it requires the Director of the Department of Transportation to erect and maintain suitable markers along the route of the highway located in Nevada. It also authorizes the Director to accept grants, gifts and donations to help pay the costs of such markers and maintenance.

ANDREW LEPEILBET (Military Order of the Purple Heart):

We encourage the Senate Committee on Government Affairs to approve this bill. Interstate 11 will become a Purple Heart Highway, which will be the first highway in our State to become Purple Heart. Twenty years ago, we made Interstate 80 part of the national Purple Heart Trail. It is a trail throughout all 50 states.

This bill recognizes our wounded or killed in action from Nevada.

TONY YARBROUGH (Veterans of Foreign Wars; United Veterans Legislative Council):

The Veterans of Foreign Wars has approximately 9,000 members, and the United Veterans Legislative Council represents roughly a half-a-million members within the State. We encourage you to approve this bill and deeply appreciate your consideration.

SENATOR SPEARMAN:

I want to remind members of this Senate Committee on Government Affairs that we are a Purple Heart State. That says it all. This is an honor to those who are fallen comrades. It would mean a lot to the remaining family members as well. I urge you to pass this legislation. All gave some, but some gave all.

CHAIR PARKS:

In 1967, I joined the military. Before going into the military, I was at home in New Hampshire. A gentleman I knew well was the custodian at the elementary school in the town I grew up in. He had served in the First World War. He was a soldier in France who was gassed and as a result he lost all his hair. This gentleman lived the rest of his life without hair. The one thing he said to me on my departure going into the Air Force was, "Get lots of medals, but make sure none of them are Purple Hearts." The Purple Heart is the medal a person does not want to be the recipient of. I think this bill is an apt tribute.

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CHAIR PARKS:

We will close the hearing on S.B. 331. The Senate Committee on Government Affairs is adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Becky Archer,
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Senator David R. Parks, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBIT SUMMARY				
Bill	Exhibit / # of pages		Witness / Entity	Description
	A	1		Agenda
	B	5		Attendance Roster
S.B. 336	C	1	Senator Dallas Harris	Proposed Amendment