

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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Opening Statement
Ranking Member Elijah E. Cummings
Delivered by Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton

H.R. 1242, the 400 Years of African-American History Commission Act

March 28, 2017

I strongly support H.R. 1242, the 400 Years of African-American History Commission Act. This bill was introduced in the House by Rep. Bobby Scott to establish a commission to celebrate the rich history of African-Americans in the United States.

The first Africans to arrive in the English colonies disembarked from a Dutch ship at Point Comfort, Virginia, in August 1619. In the almost 400 years since then, African-American communities have endured slavery, discrimination, and economic deprivation.

Yet these communities have continued to thrive. African-Americans have become pioneers and leaders in everything from politics and civil rights activism to science, athletics, and the arts.

The Commission—along with states, community groups, and nonprofit organizations—would celebrate this rich history by developing programs and providing grant support for anniversary activities throughout the country.

It would also encourage the publication and distribution of scholarly research on African-Americans over the past 400 years.

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for including this legislation in today's markup and Rep. Scott for his work on this important measure.

I urge Members to support H.R. 1242.

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