

ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION No. 14

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2020 SESSION

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman LINDA S. CARTER

District 22 (Middlesex, Somerset and Union)

Assemblyman WILLIAM W. SPEARMAN

District 5 (Camden and Gloucester)

SYNOPSIS

Urges recreational programs, swim schools, and swim teams to promote participation by African-American youth in swim programs.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



1 **AN ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION** urging recreational programs, swim
2 schools, and swim teams to promote participation by African-
3 American youth in swim programs.
4
5 **WHEREAS**, Drowning is the fifth leading cause of injury death for
6 persons of all ages, and the second leading cause of injury death for
7 children between the ages of one and 14; and
8 **WHEREAS**, Each day, approximately ten people die from unintentional
9 drowning; of those ten, two will be children aged fourteen years of
10 age or younger; and
11 **WHEREAS**, More children between the ages of one and four die from
12 drowning than any other cause of death; and
13 **WHEREAS**, According to the Centers for Disease Control and
14 Prevention, African-American children between the ages of five
15 and 19 drown in swimming pools at rates more than five times
16 higher than those of white children; and
17 **WHEREAS**, Eleven and 12 year old African- American children drown
18 in swimming pools at rates ten times higher than those of white
19 children; and
20 **WHEREAS**, In the United States, the ability to swim is divided along
21 racial lines; and
22 **WHEREAS**, White Americans are twice as likely to know how to swim
23 as African Americans; and
24 **WHEREAS**, The origin of this disparity can be traced to the 1920s and
25 1930s, when thousands of public swimming pools were opened
26 across the country, creating a culture of swimming for millions of
27 Americans; and
28 **WHEREAS**, However, because of Jim Crow laws, these public pools
29 were segregated and only a fraction of them were intended for use
30 by African Americans; and
31 **WHEREAS**, In the 1940s and 1950s, federal court decisions
32 desegregated public spaces, including swimming pools and, as a
33 result, white swimmers abandoned municipal pools; and
34 **WHEREAS**, This led to a drop of community investment in public
35 swimming pools. Municipalities did not invest in building new
36 pools as they had previously, maintenance on existing pools was
37 neglected, and eventually dilapidated pools were closed down
38 rather than repaired; and
39 **WHEREAS**, Because of this pattern of discrimination, swimming did
40 not become a significant part of the recreational culture within
41 African American communities; and
42 **WHEREAS**, Today, nearly 60 years after the abolishment of the Jim
43 Crow laws that kept African Americans from public swimming
44 pools, many African American children still never get a chance to
45 learn how to swim; and
46 **WHEREAS**, USA Swimming, the nation's organizing body for the
47 sport, has 337,000 members, of whom only approximately one
48 percent are African American; and

1 **WHEREAS**, Despite Simone Manuel’s Olympic gold medal success in
2 2016, only three of 45 swimmers on the 2016 Olympic team were
3 African-American, and out of 107 historically black colleges and
4 universities, not one has a functioning 50-meter pool; and

5 **WHEREAS**, With few role models and scarce opportunities to learn
6 how to swim, many African American children view swimming as
7 an inaccessible and uninviting sport, and an inability to swim
8 prevents African Americans teens from being qualified for a variety
9 of summer employment opportunities, including lifeguards and
10 camp counselors; and

11 **WHEREAS**, Recreational programs, swim schools, and swim teams
12 should promote participation by African-Americans in youth swim
13 programs in order to combat racial stereotypes, increase access to
14 swimming pools for children living in the inner cities, expand
15 employment opportunities, and ultimately save the lives of African-
16 American youth in the State of New Jersey; now, therefore,

17
18 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the General Assembly of the State of New
19 *Jersey:*

20
21 1. This House encourages recreational programs, swim schools,
22 and swim teams to promote participation by African-American
23 youth in swim programs in order to combat racial stereotypes,
24 increase access to swimming pools for children living in the inner
25 cities, expand employment opportunities, and ultimately save the
26 lives of African-American youth in the State of New Jersey.

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28 2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State,
29 shall be transmitted by the Clerk of the General Assembly to USA
30 Swimming and the New Jersey Recreation and Park Association.

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STATEMENT

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35 In the United States, the ability to swim is divided along racial
36 lines. White Americans are twice as likely to know how to swim as
37 African Americans. The origin of this disparity can be traced to the
38 1920s and 1930s when thousands of public swimming pools were
39 opened across the country, creating a culture of swimming for
40 millions of Americans. However, because of Jim Crow laws, these
41 public pools were segregated and only a fraction of them were
42 intended for use by African Americans.

43 In the 1940s and 1950s, federal court decisions desegregated
44 public spaces, including swimming pools and, as a result, white
45 swimmers abandoned municipal pools. This led to a drop of
46 community investment in public swimming pools. Municipalities
47 did not invest in building new pools as they had previously,
48 maintenance on existing pools was neglected, and eventually

1 dilapidated pools were closed down rather than repaired. As a
2 result, swimming did not become a significant part of the
3 recreational culture within African American communities

4 This resolution encourages recreational programs, swim schools,
5 and swim teams to promote participation by African-American
6 youth in swim programs in order to combat racial stereotypes,
7 increase access to swimming pools for all children living in the
8 inner cities, expand employment opportunities, and ultimately save
9 the lives of African-American youth in the State of New Jersey.