

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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# 130th MAINE LEGISLATURE

## FIRST SPECIAL SESSION-2021

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Legislative Document

No. 1441

H.P. 1057

House of Representatives, April 12, 2021

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**An Act To Create a James Weldon Johnson Annual Observance  
Day and an Observance Task Force**

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Received by the Clerk of the House on April 8, 2021. Referred to the Committee on State and Local Government pursuant to Joint Rule 308.2 and ordered printed pursuant to Joint Rule 401.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R B. Hunt".

ROBERT B. HUNT  
Clerk

Presented by Representative TALBOT ROSS of Portland.  
Cosponsored by Senator MAXMIN of Lincoln and  
Representatives: EVANS of Dover-Foxcroft, HANLEY of Pittston, MATLACK of St. George,  
Senator: HICKMAN of Kennebec.

1 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

2 **Sec. 1. 1 MRSA §150-Q** is enacted to read:

3 **§150-Q. James Weldon Johnson Day**

4 The Governor shall annually issue a proclamation designating June 17th of each year  
5 as James Weldon Johnson Day in honor of writer and civil rights activist James Weldon  
6 Johnson.

7 **Sec. 2. James Weldon Johnson observance task force established.** The  
8 Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations,  
9 established under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 5, section 25001, shall establish a  
10 James Weldon Johnson observance task force, referred to in this section as "the task force."

11 **1. Membership.** Membership of the task force may include representatives of:

- 12 A. The Town of Wiscasset;
- 13 B. A civil rights organization whose primary mission is racial justice;
- 14 C. Historical societies;
- 15 D. Scholars whose disciplines are in African-American history and culture;
- 16 E. Literary societies;
- 17 F. The Maine State Archives;
- 18 G. The Maine State Museum;
- 19 H. Regional and national efforts engaged in memorializing James Weldon Johnson;
- 20 I. Creative writing programs;
- 21 J. Educators; and
- 22 K. Other groups that the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous  
23 and Maine Tribal Populations determines will help the task force in its work.

24 **2. Duties.** The task force shall:

- 25 A. Develop methods to educate the public on James Weldon Johnson's life and legacy  
26 in order to continue his work to end systemic racism;
- 27 B. Study models for formally observing and promoting figures of importance;
- 28 C. Connect with local, regional and national efforts that honor James Weldon Johnson;  
29 and
- 30 D. Explore opportunities for memorializing James Weldon Johnson's life such as a  
31 creative writing scholarship, annual events and programs, sister state and city  
32 relationships, a walking trail, a geographical marker and links to cultural tourism.

33 **3. Funding.** The Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and  
34 Maine Tribal Populations may raise outside funds in order to fund the task force and is not  
35 required to convene the task force if sufficient funds are not secured.

36 **4. Report.** The Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine  
37 Tribal Populations shall submit an interim report to the Joint Standing Committee on State  
38 and Local Government no later than January 15, 2022 that includes the status of the task

1 force and a timeline for its work, including a date for a final report to the committee if  
2 funding has been secured by the commission.

3

### **SUMMARY**

4 This bill establishes June 17th as James Weldon Johnson Day in honor of writer and  
5 civil rights activist James Weldon Johnson.

6 The bill also directs the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous  
7 and Maine Tribal Populations to establish a James Weldon Johnson observance task force  
8 to develop ideas for continuing James Weldon Johnson's work to end systemic racism and  
9 to explore opportunities for memorializing his life.