

Date of Hearing: June 13, 2016

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Jim Frazier, Chair

ACR 174 (Bigelow) – As Introduced April 21, 2016

**SUBJECT:** Buffalo Soldiers Memorial Highway

**SUMMARY:** Designates a portion of State Highway 41 from the Mariposa-Madera County line to the entrance of Yosemite National Park as the “Buffalo Soldiers Memorial Highway.”

Specifically, **this resolution:**

- 1) Designates the portion of State Highway Route 41 from post mile 1.841 at the Mariposa – Madera County line to post mile 4.918 at the entrance to Yosemite National Park as the “Buffalo Soldiers Memorial Highway.”
- 2) Requests that the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) determine the costs of erecting appropriate signs, which would include this special designation, consistent with the signing requirements for the state highway system, and upon receiving donations from non-state sources covering the cost, to erect those signs.

**EXISTING LAW:** Assigns Caltrans the responsibility of operating and maintaining state highways including the installation and maintenance of highway signs.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown, but the measure requests that Caltrans only erect the appropriate signage upon receiving donations from non-state sources covering the cost.

**COMMENTS:** The author seeks to honor the Buffalo Soldiers and their historic connection and legacy with our National Parks, specifically Yosemite National Park by designating a portion of State Highway 41 to the entrance of Yosemite as the “Buffalo Soldiers Memorial Highway.”

In 1866, the United States Congress created six segregated regiments that were ultimately consolidated into four African American regiments: the 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 24th and 25th Infantry. The United States Army served as the official administrator of Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks between 1891 and 1913. In that capacity, it helped create a model for park management as we know it today. Approximately 500 Buffalo Soldiers, mainly from the 24th Infantry and 9th Cavalry, served in Yosemite National Park and Sequoia National Park. Their duties ranged from evicting poachers and timber thieves to extinguishing forest fires. They also oversaw the construction of roads, trails, and other infrastructure.

The author notes that the presence of these troops invigorated the local economy and the soldiers acting as official stewards of park lands brought a sense of law and order to the mountain wilderness. Among their many other accomplishments, the troops assigned to Yosemite National Park oversaw the building of an arboretum near the south fork of the Merced River in 1904. One scholar considered the area to contain the first marked nature trail in the National Park System.

According to the author, as the nation celebrates the centennial of the National Park System this year, this resolution would not only honor the legacy of the Buffalo Soldiers in connection to our

parks, but forever build a bridge for all future generations to understand that these incredible treasures belong to each and every one of us.

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

**Support**

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees

**Opposition**

None on file

**Analysis Prepared by:** Melissa White / TRANS. / (916) 319-2093