



*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

**MASSACHUSETTS BLACK AND LATINO LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS**

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**Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus Celebrates Black History Month and the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Birth of Great Barrington Native W.E.B. Du Bois**

BOSTON— Yesterday, the Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus (MBLLC), in coordination with Speaker Robert DeLeo and Representative Smitty Pignatelli (D-Lenox), honored the 150th birthday of W.E.B. Du Bois, the civil rights pioneer and native of Great Barrington, Massachusetts. The event took place during formal session in the House Chamber and featured a keynote speech from two-time Pulitzer Prize winning Du Bois biographer Dr. David Levering Lewis. Following the event, Governor Baker joined the MBLLC, Dr. Levering Lewis, and Representative Pignatelli for a reception in the House of Representatives.

The event began with opening remarks from Speaker DeLeo followed by MBLLC Chair, Frank Moran (D-Lawrence), Representative Pignatelli, Dr. Lewis, and the Assistant Majority Leader and MBLLC member, Representative Byron Rushing (D-Boston).

Dr. Lewis, a prominent American historian and recipient of the 2009 National Humanities Medal from President Barack Obama, reflected on the life and works of W.E.B. Du Bois and his impact on civil rights and progressive ideals in American and across the globe. He is currently teaching as the Julius Silver University Professor and Professor of History Emeritus at New York University.

“Black History Month is a chance to not only highlight and celebrate the great achievements of the Black community before us, but also to redouble our efforts as we focus on the challenges ahead for all people of color,” Representative Moran (D-Lawrence). “*My colleagues and I within the Caucus were humbled to recognize Massachusetts’ very own civil rights pioneer, W.E.B. Du Bois*”, continued Representative Moran.

A resolution was drafted by Representative Pignatelli to honor the remarkable life of W.E.B. Du Bois and recognize Great Barrington as his birthplace. Speaker Robert DeLeo and the entire Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus joined Pignatelli in signing the resolution, which was later adopted by the House of Representatives.

*“I am proud that W.E.B. Du Bois was born and raised in my district in Great Barrington,” Representative Pignatelli said. “It is an honor to celebrate the incredible impact this leader has had on our society, and the event could not have come at a better time. Du Bois has had a lasting influence on the 21st century and it’s fantastic that we can still celebrate his work today. I want to thank the Speakers office and the Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus for their partnership on this historic event,” continued Representative Pignatelli.*

The closing remarks were given by Representative Byron Rushing (D-Boston), who introduced a rendition of *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, the African-American National Anthem.

*“I was pleased that we were able to end this commemoration with all the legislators and guests singing Lift Every Voice and Sing,” Representative Rushing said. “These words were written by James Weldon Johnson, who was a lawyer, diplomat, songwriter, novelist and poet, and civil rights activist and as the first African American executive secretary of the NAACP worked with DuBois. The words and tune spread throughout the black communities of America and became known as the ‘Negro National Anthem,” continued Representative Rushing.*

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