

Representative Meredith Lawson-Rowe
Vern Riffe Center for Government & Arts
77 S. High St., 10th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215
(614) 644-6002
Rep05@ohiohouse.gov



Committees:
Local Government
Community Revitalization
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HB 166 Sponsor Testimony
House Government Oversight Committee
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Chairman Hall, Vice Chair Ferguson, Ranking Member Humphrey, and members of the House Government Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on House Bill 166.

House Bill 166 seeks to establish March 10th as Harriet Tubman Day in Ohio.

Harriet Tubman was born as the enslaved Araminta Ross in Dorchester County, Maryland around March 1822. Like most enslaved individuals, Tubman was beaten and whipped severely by her enslavers. The worst of these was when a child Tubman got in the path of an irate overseer's heavy metal weight, which was intended to hit another slave. The weight hit Tubman, instead, and caused dizziness, pain, and bouts of hypersomnia, all of which afflicted her throughout the rest of her life.

The hit also spawned Tubman to have strange visions and vivid dreams, which she ascribed to premonitions from God of her being free and helping others escape to freedom as well. This, combined with her Methodist upbringing, led Tubman to become, 1) devoutly religious and 2) committed to fulfilling these premonitions.

In September 1849, Harriet, then married to John Tubman, escaped to the free city of Philadelphia with two of her brothers after the death of their owner. However, her brothers, guilt-ridden by leaving behind their wives and children, went back and Harriet returned with them. Later that fall, she escaped back into Pennsylvania for good, alone.

In December 1850, Tubman returned to Maryland to assist her niece and great-nieces and nephews in escaping to Philadelphia after hearing that they would be sold to another owner. Around this time, Tubman began brandishing the first name of "Harriet" to hide her identity, as she was considered a "fugitive" for having escaped and aided in the escape of others from enslavement, and to honor her mother, Harriet Ross.

In 1851, Tubman returned to Maryland again, this time retrieving her youngest brother and two other men. Later that year, she returned once again to retrieve her husband. Unfortunately, her husband had married another woman and refused to leave Maryland. Tubman turned her disappointment and anger to action, finding other enslaved people and helping them escape to Philadelphia.

Between 1851 and 1862, Tubman made more than a dozen trips to the Eastern Shore of Maryland, rescuing a total of some 70 enslaved individuals, including her three remaining brothers, their wives, some of their children, and her aging parents, and provided specific instructions of escape to nearly five dozen additional enslaved persons, all of whom fled successfully to Philadelphia.

Tubman also had an extraordinary mid and later life during and after the Civil War, which my joint sponsor will touch upon in his remarks.

In 1990, the United States Congress officially proclaimed March 10th as “Harriet Tubman Day” to recognize Tubman’s awe-inspiring life and legacy and to commemorate the anniversary of her passing in 1913. Thus, colleagues, let’s also recognize the resiliency, strength, and fortitude of Mrs. Harriet Tubman by electing March 10th as Harriet Tubman Day in Ohio.

Thank you and I will now pass it over to Representative Williams to offer his remarks.