

113TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. RES. 514

Honoring Thomas Jennings of New York City as the first African-American to be granted a patent by the United States.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 12, 2014

Mr. JEFFRIES (for himself, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Ms. KELLY of Illinois, Ms. LEE of California, Mr. RICHMOND, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mr. RANGEL, Ms. FUDGE, Mr. RUSH, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, Mr. NADLER, Mr. ISRAEL, Mr. CROWLEY, Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York, Mr. TONKO, Ms. SLAUGHTER, Mr. OWENS, and Mr. MEEKS) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

RESOLUTION

Honoring Thomas Jennings of New York City as the first African-American to be granted a patent by the United States.

Whereas Thomas Jennings was born a free African-American in New York City in 1791 and became a successful tailor with a shop on Church Street in New York City;

Whereas Thomas Jennings invented a cleaning process called “dry scouring”, which was the precursor to dry cleaning;

Whereas, on March 3, 1821, Thomas Jennings became the first African-American to be granted a patent by the United States for his cleaning process;

Whereas, before the Civil War, patent laws made it significantly hard, if not impossible, for slaves to hold a patent, but Thomas Jennings was able to obtain a patent because of his free status; and

Whereas Thomas Jennings utilized the earnings from his invention and business to help advance civil rights for African-Americans and to advocate for the abolition of slavery: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) honors Thomas Jennings as the first African-American to be granted a patent by the United
3 States Patent and Trademark Office;

4 (2) commends Thomas Jennings for his economic contributions to the United States through
5 use of the patent system; and

6 (3) acknowledges that Thomas Jennings' inventive contributions encourage Americans to continue
7 a legacy of innovation in the fields of science,
8 technology, engineering, and math.
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