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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 1175 Session of  
2018

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INTRODUCED BY DAVIDSON, BIZZARRO, HENNESSEY, READSHAW, NEILSON,  
HILL-EVANS, THOMAS, MILLARD, MURT, YOUNGBLOOD, CALTAGIRONE,  
KINSEY, FITZGERALD, SCHWEYER AND DAVIS, OCTOBER 16, 2018

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INTRODUCED AS NONCONTROVERSIAL RESOLUTION UNDER RULE 35,  
OCTOBER 16, 2018

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A RESOLUTION

1 Designating October 4, 2018, as "Henrietta Lacks Day" in  
2 Pennsylvania.

3 WHEREAS, Henrietta Lacks was born August 1, 1920, in Roanoke,  
4 Virginia, and was given the name Loretta Pleasant, which she  
5 later changed; and

6 WHEREAS, Following the death of her mother in 1924, Henrietta  
7 was sent to live with her grandfather on a tobacco farm in  
8 Clover, Virginia, where she met her future husband David Lacks;  
9 and

10 WHEREAS, Henrietta conceived her first child with David Lacks  
11 in 1934 and they later married in 1941; and

12 WHEREAS, Henrietta and David had a total of five children  
13 over the course of her lifetime; and

14 WHEREAS, The Lacks family eventually moved from Virginia to  
15 Maryland during World War II in search of wartime employment;  
16 and

17 WHEREAS, Henrietta visited Johns Hopkins Hospital, one of the

1 few hospitals to treat poor African-Americans at the time, on  
2 January 29, 1951, to diagnose and treat an unusual feeling of  
3 abdominal pain; and

4 WHEREAS, Following an examination at the hospital, Henrietta  
5 was diagnosed with cervical cancer and began undergoing radium  
6 treatments soon thereafter; and

7 WHEREAS, Henrietta did not respond well to treatment and her  
8 body was quickly consumed with cancer; and

9 WHEREAS, Although Henrietta ultimately passed away on October  
10 4, 1951, at the age of 31, her cells continue to impact the  
11 world; and

12 WHEREAS, During Henrietta's treatment her attending  
13 physician, Dr. Howard Jones, sent a sample of her cancer cells  
14 without her consent to a prominent cancer and virus researcher,  
15 Dr. George Gey, who had begun collecting cells of patients who  
16 visited Johns Hopkins Hospital with cervical cancer; and

17 WHEREAS, While most of the cancer cells Dr. George Gey  
18 collected died quickly in his lab, he discovered that  
19 Henrietta's cells were unique in that, instead of dying, her  
20 cells doubled every 20 to 24 hours; and

21 WHEREAS, Henrietta's cells were found to have the capability  
22 to thrive in tissue culture in Dr. Gey's lab and have since been  
23 cloned and shared freely throughout the world for countless  
24 medical undertakings and research; and

25 WHEREAS, Henrietta's cells, referred to as "HeLa" cells, have  
26 been used to study the effects of toxins, drugs, hormones and  
27 viruses on the growth of cancer cells without experimenting on  
28 humans; and

29 WHEREAS, Henrietta's cells have also been used to test the  
30 effects of radiation and poisons, to study the effects of zero

1 gravity on human cells, to study the human genome and were  
2 crucial in the development of the polio vaccine; and

3 WHEREAS, In recent years, the Lacks family has partnered with  
4 Johns Hopkins Hospital to help teach the world about Henrietta  
5 Lacks and her cells through annual events such as the Henrietta  
6 Lacks Symposium and Henrietta Lacks Memorial Lecture, as well as  
7 through educational programs and scholarships for students in  
8 Baltimore, Maryland, and across the world; and

9 WHEREAS, Henrietta's life has even inspired the creation of  
10 the Henrietta Lacks Foundation, which provides financial  
11 assistance to individuals and families in need who have made  
12 important contributions to scientific research without  
13 personally benefiting from those contributions, particularly  
14 those used in research without their knowledge or consent; and

15 WHEREAS, As of 2015, there were countless patents that  
16 involve Henrietta's cells and more than 20 tons of her cells  
17 have been grown in culture; and

18 WHEREAS, It is apparent that many advancements in medical  
19 research have been made possible through Henrietta's cells and,  
20 although she was never aware that her cells possessed unique  
21 properties, Henrietta's contribution has had a lasting impact on  
22 the world; therefore be it

23 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives designate October  
24 4, 2018, as "Henrietta Lacks Day" in Pennsylvania.