Commonwealth of Massachusetts

A Proclamation

His Excellency Governor Deval L. Patrick

Whereas Paul Cuffe, born on January 17th two hundred and fifty years ago on Cuttyhunk Island, was one of the first African American businessmen in the country; and

Whereas As a young boy, his family moved and settled in the Dartmouth village of Westport. Living near the center of the colonial whaling industry, New Bedford, ignited his interest and passion for sailing, ships and whaling; and

Whereas Self taught in the world of sailing and whaling, Cuffe began his own shipping company and quickly built a lucrative shipping empire with a fleet out of Westport; and

Whereas At age 21 he refused to pay his taxes because he did not have the right to vote. Believing that he should not have to pay taxes if he was not being represented, in 1780 he petitioned the Dartmouth Board of Selectmen requesting the Town Meeting grant the right to vote to free African Americans or a relief of taxation. He petition was denied, but is cited as an early influence that led the General Court to grant voting rights to all male citizens of the Commonwealth in 1783; and

Whereas An early patriot and abolitionist, Paul Cuffe was a prominent member of the Westport community, having built the first school, supported its teacher and built the new meeting house. He was also strongly opposed to slavery and was actively involved in abolitionist campaigns around New England,

Now, Therefore, I, Deval L. Patrick, Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, do hereby proclaim January 17th, 2009 to be,

PAUL CUFFE DAY

And urge all the citizens of the Commonwealth to take cognizance of this event
and participate fittingly in its observance.

Given at the Executive Chamber in Boston, this ninth day of January, in the year two thousand and nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America, the two hundred and thirty-second.

By His Excellency

DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR OF THE COMMONWEALTH

WILLIAM FRANCIS GALVIN
SECRETARY OF THE COMMONWEALTH

God Save the Commonwealth of Massachusetts