

1 [Recognition]

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3 **Resolution recognizing William Alexander Leidesdorff, Jr. as the African Founding**
4 **Father of California.**

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6 WHEREAS, On March 26, 1810, William Alexander Leidesdorff Jr. was born in St.
7 Croix, Danish Virgin Islands to Anna Marie Sparks, an African woman, and William
8 Leidesdorff Sr. of Denmark; and

9 WHEREAS, In 1834, William Alexander Leidesdorff Jr. was naturalized as a U.S.
10 citizen in New Orleans, Louisiana and became a leading cotton broker and sea merchant
11 trading in New York, Maryland, Hawaii, Alaska, Mexico, South America, and throughout his
12 birth home, the Caribbean; and,

13 WHEREAS, In 1841, William Alexander Leidesdorff Jr. sailed the first legal U.S.
14 commercial shipping vessel, the Julia Ann, into the sleepy Mexican fishing village of Yerba
15 Buena, modern San Francisco, to establish a world maritime center; and,

16 WHEREAS, In 1843, William Alexander Leidesdorff Jr. was naturalized as Mexican
17 citizen to facilitate acquiring a vast land grant from the Mexican authorities in Sacramento
18 Valley as an early advocate of creating dual citizenship; and,

19 WHEREAS, In 1844, William Alexander Leidesdorff Jr. obtained title to Rancho Rio de
20 Los Americanos, over 35,000 acres of prime commercial real estate along the south bank of
21 the American River, and through his global trade and commerce projects, financed,
22 developed and helped stabilize the Sacramento Valley; and,

23 WHEREAS, In 1845, William Alexander Leidesdorff Jr. accepted the position of United
24 States Vice-Consul in the Mexican Alta California region and for serving our nation in this
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1 capacity, he became the first U.S. African-American Diplomat in history and was
2 affectionately known as the “African Founding Father of California”; and,

3 WHEREAS, In 1846, William Alexander Leidesdorff Jr. was an active leader in the
4 Bear Flag Revolt during the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848 and his official reports are
5 valuable accounts of the U.S. acquisition of California from Mexico; and,

6 WHEREAS, In 1847, William Alexander Leidesdorff Jr. captained the first and only
7 steam ship, the Sitka, in California prior to the Gold Rush and his maiden steam voyage up
8 the Sacramento River is immortalized on our California State Seal and recognizes his vision
9 for increased maritime transportation of California’s agricultural products to world markets;
10 and,

11 WHEREAS, William Alexander Leidesdorff Jr., a leading civic leader and pioneer in the
12 successful quest for California to become the 31st State in the United States, was elected
13 Treasurer, owned the largest home, constructed the first City Hotel, built the first commercial
14 shipping warehouse and donated the land to build the first public school of education in the
15 City of San Francisco; and,

16 WHEREAS, In 1848, William Alexander Leidesdorff Jr. received official notification of
17 vast quantities of gold on his immense cattle and wheat ranch along today’s State Highway
18 50 corridor prior to his untimely death on May 18, 1848; and,

19 WHEREAS, It is a fitting tribute to the legacy of a great American pioneer that the
20 Board of Supervisors join in the celebration of “Discover the Legacy, William Alexander
21 Leidesdorff Jr.”, March 21-27, 2004; now, therefore, be it

22 RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Board of Supervisors recognizes William
23 Alexander Leidesdorff, Jr. as the African Founding Father of California.
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