



# State of North Carolina

**ROY COOPER**  
GOVERNOR

**NORTH CAROLINA MILITARY HALL OF FIRSTS**

**2023**

**BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA**

## **A PROCLAMATION**

**WHEREAS**, Captain Frederick C. Branch was one of the first African Americans to enter the United States Marine Corps after President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802; Captain Branch's service and commitment during World War II, earned him admission into the Officer Training Program, making him the first African American Commissioned Officer in the United States Marine Corp; and

**WHEREAS**, Major General William C. Lee was the Commanding General for the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division and is known as the Father of the US Airborne; he served in World War I, World War II, and the interwar period; and

**WHEREAS**, Technical Sergeant John D. Lewis was one of the first African Americans to serve in the United States Marine Corps as part of the Montford Marines, and because of his military training, he became the first African American radio announcer and television on air personality in North Carolina; and

**WHEREAS**, Mary Baynard Wootten was the first woman in the North Carolina National Guard and one of the first aerial photographers; she used her design talent and is credited with creating the original Pepsi Cola Logo; she served as the Chief of Publicity and Assistant to the Adjutant General for North Carolina; and

**WHEREAS**, Gunnery Sergeant Francis Marion Hooper, Jr. was one of the first African Americans to serve in the United States Marines as part of the Montford Marines and he trained in Jacksonville, NC; and

**WHEREAS**, Lieutenant William McBryar was one of the most distinguished soldiers of his generation; he received the Medal of Honor for his actions in Arizona Territory in 1890, making him the second African American from North Carolina to be awarded this honor; and

**WHEREAS**, Gunnery Sergeant Robert Lee Thomas broke the color-barrier in 1942, becoming a part of the rich legacy of the Montford Marines by fighting the enemy during World War II and fighting for civil rights back home; and

**WHEREAS**, PFC Charles George became the only member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians to be awarded the Medal of Honor; he gave his life in Korea to save his comrades, dying for his country at the young age of 20; and

**WHEREAS**, all of these trailblazers served with honor and distinction over a lifetime that brought the highest credit to themselves, their branches of service, and the great State of North Carolina;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, I, ROY COOPER, Governor of the State of North Carolina, do hereby proclaim November 9, 2023, as "NORTH CAROLINA MILITARY HALL OF FIRSTS" in North Carolina, and commend its observance to all citizens.



  
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Roy Cooper  
Governor

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the Great Seal of the State of North Carolina at the Capitol in Raleigh this seventh day of November in the year of our Lord two thousand and twenty-three and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-eighth.