

HR 3 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Carrier: Rep. Nelson

House Committee On Rules**Action Date:** 06/05/25**Action:** Be adopted with amendments. (Printed A-Eng.)**Vote:** 4-0-3-0**Yeas:** 4 - Bowman, Kropf, Pham H, Valderrama**Exc:** 3 - Boshart Davis, Drazan, Elmer**Fiscal:** No fiscal impact**Revenue:** No revenue impact**Prepared By:** Melissa Leoni, LPRO Analyst**Meeting Dates:** 2/19, 6/5**WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:**

The measure recognizes and honors Oregon’s rich history of Black drag and congratulates all those whose spirited contributions have made Oregon’s Black drag community one of the most vibrant and vital in the nation.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- The history of Black drag in Oregon

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

The amendment revises and adds "whereas" clauses, including adding members of Portland's Black drag community, events, and accomplishments, and adding clauses for June as Pride Month and Juneteenth.

BACKGROUND:

Oregon has a rich tradition of building, supporting, and celebrating LGBTQ communities, and the Black drag community in Portland is among the most vibrant and storied in the entire United States. June is Pride Month, a time when many members of the LGBTQ community honor the history and struggles that led to the advancements in rights for LGBTQ people today. Juneteenth commemorates the emancipation of enslaved Black people and is celebrated today as a national and state holiday.

Portland’s Black drag community is deeply rooted in an illustrious history of fantasy, and members of the community have significantly contributed to the Black drag entertainment culture, fostering creativity and inclusivity since as far back as 1958.

In 1969, Rochelle was crowned the first Black Rose Queen, Rose Queen X, at the “Days of Wine and Roses” Fall Ball. In 1970, Portland’s Black drag community connected with the blossoming concept of the Court with the formation of two parallel nonprofit organizations, the Portland Forum and the Imperial Sovereign Rose Court (ISRC). Prior to the election of the newly designated title of “Rose Empress,” it was determined that, to ensure that nothing be taken away from Portland’s own unique experiences in drag history, all past “Queens” would be assigned their appropriate chronological numbers, in sequence to the “Rose Empress” designation.

In 1971, Talani was crowned the Portland Forum’s first Black Rose Empress, Rose Empress XIII, and Lillian Carter was crowned Black Princess I. In 1973, Irvina, Lillian Carter, Leora, and Desi presented a grand, first-in-the-nation all-Black Queens entrance at the ISRC Coronation. In 1975, the United Ebony Kingdom (UEK) was formed, and Irvina was crowned Queen I of the UEK that same year.

The year 1975 also ushered in a new era as the last Sovereign Rose Empress gave her blessing to, and relinquished a portion of her territory to, the newly formed Imperial Court of the Emerald Empire (ISCEE) in Eugene. In 1976, ISRC elevated its first Black Monarch by public election, and upon his crowning, Rose Emperor II Harold became the first Black Emperor in the International Court System.

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On October 16, 1977, with deepest admiration for those trailblazers that helped build up the Black drag community in Oregon, Rose Empress XIX proclaimed “That each Empress shall bear one number and one number only, and the number from the year of their reign shall never be altered from what we, the people, have established in the past.” In 1977, LaWanda Jackson was crowned Rosebud 1977, a pioneering title that marked the beginning of her influential journey in drag culture.

In 1978, territory would be adjusted again when ISRC granted sovereignty to the Imperial Sovereign Court of the Willamette Empire (ISCWE) in Salem. In 1980, Misty Waters was crowned ISRC’s first Black Trans Princess XII. In 1983, Rosey Waters was crowned ISRC’s first Black Rose Empress, Rose Empress XXVI. In 1986, Lady Elaine Peacock was crowned ISRC’s Rose Empress XXIX. In 1988, Cicely was crowned ISRC’s Rose Empress XXXI.

In 1988, the Portland Forum and ISRC merged, and the organization operated from that point forward as a newly unified ISRC. In 1993, Maria Peters Lake was crowned ISRC’s first Black Female Rose Empress, Rose Empress XXXVI. In 1997, Diva Simone Slaughter was crowned ISCEE’s first Black Empress, Empress XXIV. In 2000, Anastasia Dubois Rosebud was crowned Rosebud 2000, marking a pivotal moment in her longstanding legacy in drag performance.

In 2001, Poison Waters, who is renowned for her advocacy work on behalf of BIPOC and LGBTQ communities in and around Portland, was crowned ISRC’s Rose Empress XLIV. That same year, DiVyne Shawnte Duv earned the title of Rosebud 2001, honoring her role as a trailblazer in drag and LGBTQ activism. In 2002, Michel’le Campbell Starr was recognized for her significant contributions to Portland’s drag community when she was named Rosebud 2002.

In 2008, Krystal Lynn Benoit was crowned ISRC’s first Black Trans Rose Empress, Rose Empress L. In 2009, Karess Ann Slaughter was crowned ISCEE’s Empress XXXVI. In 2010, Sheniqua Volt was crowned Miss Gay Pride, and Isaiah Esquire’s reign as Mr. Gay Pride 2010 marked a significant milestone in the community’s celebration of diversity and LGBTQ visibility. In 2011, Sativa Platinum was crowned Rosebud 2011, and Kourtnei Capree Duv was crowned Sweethearts of Portland’s Miss Sweetheart XXIII, a title that exemplified her commitment to the art of drag and community engagement and solidified her place in Portland’s legendary LGBTQ entertainment scene.

In 2012, Isaiah Esquire was crowned the first Mr. Gay Oregon United States, honoring his commitment to advocacy and representation. That same year, Kourtnei Capree Duv earned the prestigious title of La Femme Magnifique International, showcasing her outstanding artistry and impact on a global scale. Sheniqua Volt that year also earned the title of Miss Poder Latino, cementing her influence at the intersection of the queer and Latino communities, and was honored as Miss Larubia.

In 2014, Stefhannie Mercury DuPont Shade was crowned Miss Gay Pride and Isaiah Esquire made history again as the first to be crowned Mr. NW FIERCE. In 2015, Kourtnei Capree Duv was crowned Miss NW FIERCE, solidifying her status as a boundary-breaking presence in the Northwest drag scene. That same year Kimber K. Shade was crowned Sweethearts of Portland’s Miss Sweetheart XXVII.

In 2017, Flawless Shade was crowned Sweethearts of Portland’s Miss Sweetheart XXIX, and Aunjelle Volt was crowned Miss La Femme Magnifique International, representing the Portland drag scene with excellence and commitment to creativity. In 2019, Flawless Shade was crowned Miss Gay Oregon XLVII, and Kiesha Monet Volt was named Miss La Femme Magnifique International, establishing her as a key figure in Portland’s drag and LGBTQ communities.

In 2020, Poison Waters began teaching a “Histories of Drag Performance in Portland” class at Portland Community College, with a prominent segment dedicated to the history of Black drag in Oregon. That same year, Rogue Storm Safari was crowned Sweethearts of Portland’s Miss Sweetheart XXXII.

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Isaiah Esquire was recognized as one of the Top 50 Burlesque Performers in the World in 2020, 2021 and 2022, further cementing his influence and artistry within the international burlesque and drag scenes. He was honored with the Honorary Sweetheart Award in 2021, recognizing his contributions to the LGBTQ community, and was named a GLAPN Queer Hero in 2021, a testament to his advocacy and leadership within the queer community. In 2021, Coco Jem Holiday was crowned Sweethearts of Portland's Miss Sweetheart XXXIII, continuing to inspire others with her talent and advocacy in the Portland drag community.

The ISRC's first all-Black reign was in 2022, when Arcadian Campbell Starr was crowned Rose Emperor XLV and T'Kara Campbell Starr was crowned Rose Empress LXIII. Isaiah Esquire received the Northwest Pioneer 'Reigning a Difference' Award in 2022, highlighting his ongoing dedication to inclusivity and positive change, and was honored with the Drag Excellence Award at the White Tusk Awards 2023. In 2023, Alexis Campbell Starr was crowned ISRC's Rose Empress LXIV and Flawless Shade was a finalist in 'Painted with Raven,' demonstrating her artistic flair and innovation in the realm of drag and performance. Flawless Shade also holds the title of Miss Gay Pride of Portland 2023-2024.

In 2024, Devlin Lynn Phoénixx was crowned ISRC's Rose Empress LXV and Isaiah Esquire was honored as Mx. International Pride by the Imperial Sovereign Rose Court. That same year, Flawless Shade starred in the music video for Logic's 'Fear,' a love letter to Portland that showcased Flawless Shade's dynamic talent and impact on both the drag and larger entertainment industries. In 2024, Rose Empress XLIV Poison Waters was named Queen Mother II of All Oregon, a lifelong title which was vacated by Queen Mother I of All Oregon Rose Empress XV Darcelle upon his death in 2023. Poison Waters is believed to be the first and only Black Queen Mother of a state within the International Court System.

Many of the founding title holders in Oregon remain actively involved in the Court system as highly respected members of the ISRC College of Monarchs. There have been decades of all-Black productions for various community charity organizations in Portland, including Peacock in the Park (1987-2004), Peacock After Dark (2008-2013), Hot Chocolate (2010-present), Race Talks: Uniting to Break the Chains of Racism presents the Annual History of Black Drag in Portland (2022-2025), and Elite Blacksperience PDX (2025).

Several all-Black production companies that support Black drag performances, events, and media in Portland, including Demand Drag (2020-present), Kourtnei Capree Duv Entertainment (2003-present), Coco's Drag Closet (2020-present), Safari Productions (2018-present), Rogue Apostles (2022-present), and Melange Productions (2018-present), came together to present Juneteenth Spirit Week 2025.

Countless Black drag entertainers have made their mark in this state, and while many have sadly passed away, Oregon has benefited tremendously from the indelible contributions these pioneering performers have made to the Black drag scene in this state and across the country.