

DESIGNATE JUNETEENTH A PUBLIC HOLIDAY

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Senate Bill 50 (S-1) as passed by the Senate

Sponsor: Sen. Sylvia A. Santana

House Committee: Government Operations

Senate Committee: Finance, Insurance, and Consumer Protection

Complete to 6-14-23

Analysis available at
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

SUMMARY:

Senate Bill 50 would amend 1865 PA 124 to designate Juneteenth a public holiday. Juneteenth would be June 19. However, if that date fell on a Sunday, then Monday, June 20, would be a public holiday instead.

The act designates a list of days as public holidays and provides that they are to be treated as a Sunday for purposes of banking and the courts. The act also designates Saturday as a half-holiday starting at noon, with exceptions allowed. The act provides for date-specific holidays (such as July 4) to be observed the next day if they fall on a Sunday.

MCL 435.101 and 435.102

BACKGROUND:

Juneteenth is an annual holiday that celebrates the end of slavery in the United States. In a broader sense, it celebrates freedom and encourages reflection on our freedoms and the need to protect them. Juneteenth is also known as Emancipation Day, Freedom Day, Jubilee Day, Juneteenth Independence Day, Black Independence Day, and Juneteenth Celebration Day, and informally as America's second Independence Day. Annette Gordon-Reed summarizes the origin of the holiday as follows:

June 19, 1865, shortened to "Juneteenth," was the day that enslaved African Americans in Texas were told that slavery has ended, two years after the Emancipation Proclamation had been signed, and just over two months after Confederate General Robert E. Lee had surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox. Despite the formal surrender, the Confederate army had continued to fight on in Texas until mid-May. It was only after they finally surrendered that Major General Gordon Granger, while at his headquarters in Galveston, prepared General Order Number 3, announcing the end of legalized slavery in the state.¹

General Order Number 3, the announcement of the end of the Civil War and the end of slavery, read in part as follows:

The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property, between former masters and slaves and the

¹ Annette Gordon-Reed, *On Juneteenth* (New York: Liveright, 2021), 11.

connection heretofore existing between them, becomes that between employer and hired labor. The Freedmen are advised to remain at their present homes and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at military posts; and they will not be supported in idleness either there or elsewhere.

According to the Congressional Research Service (CRS),² “Even after the general order, some enslavers withheld the information from enslaved people, holding them enslaved through one more harvest season” The CRS continues:

Texans celebrated Juneteenth beginning in 1866 with community-centric events, such as parades, cookouts, prayer gatherings, historical and cultural readings, and musical performances. Over time, communities have developed their own traditions. Some communities purchased land for Juneteenth celebrations, such as Emancipation Park in Houston, Texas. As families emigrated from Texas to other parts of the United States, they carried Juneteenth celebrations with them.

On January 1, 1980, Juneteenth officially became a Texas state holiday... Since then, the federal government, all 50 states, and the District of Columbia have also commemorated or recognized the day.

In 2021, legislation was passed and signed establishing Juneteenth National Independence Day as a federal holiday. In addition, according to the CRS, as of May 30, 2023, “At least 22 states along with the District of Columbia have designated Juneteenth as a permanent paid and/or legal holiday through legislation or executive action. Some states have made Juneteenth a paid holiday through a state statute that observes federal holidays or other days designated by the President as state holidays or by specifically directing the governor to make an annual proclamation.”³

In Michigan, Juneteenth has been a holiday for state employees, and a court holiday, since 2022. The bill would provide for Juneteenth to be a state legal holiday which would be observed in the same manner and accorded the same recognition as all other legal holidays observed and accorded by the state.

FISCAL IMPACT:

A fiscal analysis is in progress.

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency staff for use by House members in their deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.

² <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R44865.pdf>

³ Those states are California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and Washington.