

**2023 -- H 6529**

LC003119

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND**

**IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2023**

**H O U S E R E S O L U T I O N**

**RECOGNIZING "JUNETEENTH NATIONAL FREEDOM DAY" ON JUNE 19, 2023**

Introduced By: Representatives Henries, Biah, Stewart, Alzate, Shekarchi, Blazejewski, Chippendale, Abney, Felix, and Hull

Date Introduced: June 14, 2023

Referred To: House read and passed

1           WHEREAS, Juneteenth originated in Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865, in celebration  
2 of the emancipation of those who had been enslaved in America. The tradition of marking the end  
3 of slavery with Emancipation Day celebrations had an earlier beginning in South Carolina on  
4 January 1, 1863, in recognition of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. Even earlier  
5 celebrations of emancipation date back to when slavery was abolished throughout the British  
6 Empire on August 1, 1834; and

7           WHEREAS, Each year after 1834, on August 1, major emancipation celebrations were  
8 organized across the West Indies and American cities with free African heritage populations. The  
9 Rhode Island cities of Providence, Newport and East Providence were early sites for major  
10 Emancipation Day celebrations and festivals dating back to the 1850s. During the 20th century,  
11 tens of thousands of people attended Emancipation Day events at Roger Williams Park, Rocky  
12 Point, and Crescent Park; and

13           WHEREAS, Juneteenth is part of a number of emancipation celebrations that date back  
14 to the early 19th century; and

15           WHEREAS, Also known as Emancipation Day, Emancipation Celebration, Freedom  
16 Day, Jun-Jun, and Juneteenth, Juneteenth National Freedom Day commemorates the strong  
17 survival instinct of African Americans who were first brought to this country stacked in the  
18 bottom of slave ships in a month-long journey across the Atlantic Ocean known as the Middle  
19 Passage; and

20           WHEREAS, Approximately eleven and a half million Africans survived the voyage to

1 the New World, with the number that died likely greater, and those who did survive were  
2 subjected to whipping, castration, branding, and rape, and were forced to submit to slavery for  
3 more than two hundred years after their arrival in the United States; and

4 WHEREAS, Events in the history of the United States that led to the Civil War of 1861  
5 centered around sectional differences between the North and South that were based on the  
6 economic and social divergence caused by the existence of slavery; and

7 WHEREAS, Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated as President of the United States in 1861,  
8 and as President, he believed and stated that the paramount object of the Civil War was to save  
9 the Union rather than to save or destroy slavery; and

10 WHEREAS, Lincoln also stated that it was his belief that all men everywhere should be  
11 free, thus adding to the growing anticipation for slaves that their ultimate liberation was at hand;  
12 and

13 WHEREAS, In 1862, the first clear sign that the end of slavery was imminent came when  
14 laws abolishing slavery in the territories of Oklahoma, Nebraska, Colorado, and New Mexico  
15 were passed; and

16 WHEREAS, In September of that same year, President Lincoln warned that if the eleven  
17 rebellious Confederate States did not return to the Union by January 1, 1863, he would declare  
18 their slaves forever free via the celebrated Emancipated Proclamation; and

19 WHEREAS, Enforcement of the Emancipation Proclamation, however, only occurred in  
20 Confederate States once they were under Union Army control and Congress subsequently passed  
21 the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution on January 31, 1865, abolishing slavery  
22 throughout the United States and its territories; and

23 WHEREAS, News of this action reached the states at different times, and it was not until  
24 June 19 of 1865, that the message of freedom reached the slaves in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana,  
25 Arkansas, and California; and

26 WHEREAS, Spontaneous celebrations erupted throughout the country when African-  
27 Americans learned of their freedom; and

28 WHEREAS, Juneteenth National Freedom Day celebrates the abolishment of slavery  
29 with excitement and great joy and is a reminder to all Americans of the status and importance that  
30 Americans of African descent hold as American citizens; now, therefore be it

31 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island hereby  
32 urges the citizens of the State of Rhode Island to join in recognizing the historical significance of  
33 Juneteenth Independence Day and the observance of Juneteenth National Freedom Day on June  
34 19<sup>th</sup>; and be it further

1           RESOLVED, That this House hereby supports the annual celebration of Juneteenth  
2 National Freedom Day in order to provide an opportunity for the people of the State to learn more  
3 about our country's past and to better understand the experiences that have shaped our nation; and  
4 be it further

5           RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to  
6 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to the Honorable Daniel J. McKee, Governor of  
7 the State of Rhode Island.

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