

2020 -- H 8134

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2020

HOUSE RESOLUTION

RESPECTFULLY REQUESTING THAT AUGUST 1ST OF EACH YEAR BE DECLARED
"EMANCIPATION DAY" IN THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

Introduced By: Representative Anastasia P. Williams

Date Introduced: September 24, 2020

Referred To: House Special Legislation

1 WHEREAS, By the late 18th century, the anti-slavery movement was gaining ground
2 within Europe and the United Kingdom. In 1792, Lord Mansfield, a respected British Judge,
3 emancipated a slave in the Somersetts's Case and also ruled that slaves could not be transported
4 out of England against their will. In 1794 France abolished slavery and in 1807, the British
5 Parliament passed the Slave Trade Act which outlawed the international slave trade, but not
6 slavery itself; and

7 WHEREAS, In 1823, the Anti-Slavery Society was founded in London and they
8 proceeded to campaign relentlessly for the abolition of slavery. They finally succeeded in 1833
9 when Parliament passed the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, which took effect on August 1 of
10 1834. This Act made the purchase or ownership of slaves illegal within the British empire except
11 for the territories in possession of the East India Company (Ceylon-now Sri Lanka, and the Island
12 of Saint Helena); and

13 WHEREAS, Most historians credit European opposition to slavery as being the key
14 reason why the Confederacy was never recognized by any European nation despite many
15 European nations' desire for access to the cotton grown in the South. The abolishment of slavery
16 on August 1, 1834, in the United Kingdom therefore played an important role in the Union's
17 victory in the Civil War and the abolishment of slavery in the United States; and

18 WHEREAS, Today, Emancipation Day is widely celebrated on August 1st annually in
19 many countries throughout the Caribbean, including Anguilla, Bahamas, Bermuda, Barbados,

1 Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Turks and Caicos Islands. It is also celebrated in
2 some American cities, and has been celebrated in Providence and Newport since the 19th century;
3 now, therefore be it

4 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island hereby
5 respectfully requests that August 1st of each year be declared “Emancipation Day” in the State of
6 Rhode Island; and be it further

7 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
8 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to Governor Gina M. Raimondo.

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