

## House Resolution

**No. 55**

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**Introduced by Assembly Member Thurmond**  
**(Coauthors: Assembly Members Brown, Burke, Cooper, Gipson,**  
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June 17, 2016

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House Resolution No. 55—Relative to Juneteenth Day celebrations.

1     WHEREAS, The state of Texas is widely considered the first  
2     state to begin Juneteenth celebrations. Informal observances have  
3     taken place there for over a century and it has been an official state  
4     holiday in Texas since 1980. Thirty-nine states, including  
5     California since 2003, and the District of Columbia have  
6     recognized Juneteenth as either a state holiday or a state holiday  
7     observance; and

8     WHEREAS, Though President Abraham Lincoln issued the  
9     Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862, to become  
10    effective January 1, 1863, it had minimal immediate effect on most  
11    slaves' day-to-day lives, particularly in the Confederate States of  
12    America; and

13    WHEREAS, Texas, as a part of the Confederacy, was resistant  
14    to the Emancipation Proclamation. But on June 18, 1865, Union  
15    troops arrived in Galveston, Texas, to take possession of the state  
16    and enforce the emancipation of its slaves. Former slaves in  
17    Galveston rejoiced in the streets with jubilant celebrations. The  
18    following day, June 19th, became known as “Juneteenth,” a name  
19    derived from a portmanteau of the words “June” and “nineteenth.”  
20    Juneteenth celebrations began in Texas the following year; and

21    WHEREAS, For former slaves, the Juneteenth celebration was  
22    a time for reassuring each other, praying, and gathering remaining

1 family members together. Juneteenth continued to be highly  
2 revered in Texas decades later, with many former slaves and  
3 descendants making an annual pilgrimage back to Galveston on  
4 this date; and

5 WHEREAS, Juneteenth education and celebrations declined in  
6 America in the early part of the 20th century. But the Civil Rights  
7 Movement of the 1950s and 1960s saw a resurgence of interest in  
8 Juneteenth, along with renewed community celebrations of the  
9 day; and

10 WHEREAS, On January 1, 1980, Juneteenth became an official  
11 state holiday in Texas through the efforts of Al Edwards, an African  
12 American former member of the Texas House of Representatives.  
13 That bill marked Juneteenth as the first emancipation celebration  
14 granted official state recognition. Representative Edwards has  
15 since actively sought to spread the observance of Juneteenth all  
16 across America; and

17 WHEREAS, In 1994, the era of the “Modern Juneteenth  
18 Movement” began when a group of Juneteenth leaders from across  
19 the country gathered in New Orleans, Louisiana, to work for greater  
20 national recognition of Juneteenth; and

21 WHEREAS, Today, Juneteenth commemorates African  
22 American freedom and emphasizes education and achievement.  
23 It is a day, a week, and in some areas, a month marked with  
24 celebrations, guest speakers, picnics, and family gatherings. It is  
25 a time for reflection and rejoicing. It is a time for assessment,  
26 self-improvement, and planning for the future; now, therefore, be  
27 it

28 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California*, That the  
29 Assembly encourages all Californians to join together in celebrating  
30 Juneteenth; and be it further

31 *Resolved*, That the Assembly and the People of the State of  
32 California recognize that the “Modern Juneteenth Movement”  
33 continues to work to pass legislation in the United States Congress  
34 to establish Juneteenth Independence Day as a National Day of  
35 Observance; and be it further

36 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies  
37 of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.

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