

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY JUNE 27, 2016

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2015–16 REGULAR SESSION

House Resolution

No. 55

Introduced by Assembly Member Thurmond

(Coauthors: Assembly Members Brown, Burke, Cooper, Gipson, Holden, Jones-Sawyer, McCarty, Ridley-Thomas, ~~and Weber~~ Weber, Achadjian, Alejo, Arambula, Baker, Bloom, Bonilla, Bonta, Calderon, Campos, Chang, Chau, Chávez, Chiu, Chu, Cooley, Dababneh, Dahle, Daly, Dodd, Eggman, Frazier, Beth Gaines, Gallagher, Cristina Garcia, Eduardo Garcia, Gatto, Gomez, Gonzalez, Gordon, Gray, Grove, Hadley, Harper, Irwin, Kim, Lackey, Levine, Linder, Lopez, Low, Maienschein, Mayes, Melendez, Mullin, Nazarian, Obernolte, O'Donnell, Olsen, Patterson, Quirk, Rodriguez, Salas, Santiago, Steinorth, Mark Stone, Ting, Wagner, Waldron, Wilk, Williams, and Wood)

June 17, 2016

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

1 slaves' day-to-day lives, particularly in the Confederate States of
2 America; and

3 WHEREAS, Texas, as a part of the Confederacy, was resistant
4 to the Emancipation Proclamation. But on June 18, 1865, Union
5 troops arrived in Galveston, Texas, to take possession of the state
6 and enforce the emancipation of its slaves. Former slaves in
7 Galveston rejoiced in the streets with jubilant celebrations. The
8 following day, June 19th, became known as "Juneteenth," a name
9 derived from a portmanteau of the words "June" and "nineteenth."
10 Juneteenth celebrations began in Texas the following year; and

11 WHEREAS, For former slaves, the Juneteenth celebration was
12 a time for reassuring each other, praying, and gathering remaining
13 family members together. Juneteenth continued to be highly
14 revered in Texas decades later, with many former slaves and
15 descendants making an annual pilgrimage back to Galveston on
16 this date; and

17 WHEREAS, Juneteenth education and celebrations declined in
18 America in the early part of the 20th century. But the Civil Rights
19 Movement of the 1950s and 1960s saw a resurgence of interest in
20 Juneteenth, along with renewed community celebrations of the
21 day; and

22 WHEREAS, On January 1, 1980, Juneteenth became an official
23 state holiday in Texas through the efforts of Al Edwards, an African
24 American former member of the Texas House of Representatives.
25 That bill marked Juneteenth as the first emancipation celebration
26 granted official state recognition. Representative Edwards has
27 since actively sought to spread the observance of Juneteenth all
28 across America; and

29 WHEREAS, In 1994, the era of the "Modern Juneteenth
30 Movement" began when a group of Juneteenth leaders from across
31 the country gathered in New Orleans, Louisiana, to work for greater
32 national recognition of Juneteenth; and

33 WHEREAS, Today, Juneteenth commemorates African
34 American freedom and emphasizes education and achievement.
35 It is a day, a week, and in some areas, a month marked with
36 celebrations, guest speakers, picnics, and family gatherings. It is
37 a time for reflection and rejoicing. It is a time for assessment,
38 self-improvement, and planning for the future; now, therefore, be
39 it

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

4 *Resolved*, That the Assembly and the People of the State of
5 California recognize that the “Modern Juneteenth Movement”
6 continues to work to pass legislation in the United States Congress
7 to establish Juneteenth Independence Day as a National Day of
8 Observance; and be it further

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