

Introduced by Senators Hall, Mitchell, and Huff

June 15, 2016

Senate Resolution No. 81—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
4 state 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
23 family members together. Juneteenth continued to be highly
24 revered in Texas decades later, with many former slaves and
25 descendants making an annual pilgrimage back to Galveston on
26 this date; and

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

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

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

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

24 *Resolved by the Senate of the State of California*, That the Senate
25 encourages all Californians to join together in celebrating
26 Juneteenth; and be it further

27 *Resolved*, That the Senate and the People of the State of
28 California recognize that the “Modern Juneteenth Movement”
29 continues to work to pass legislation in the United States Congress
30 to establish Juneteenth Independence Day as a National Day of
31 Observance; and be it further

32 *Resolved*, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of
33 this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.