

Senate Resolution No. 81

Introduced by Senators Hall, Mitchell, and Huff

Relative to Juneteenth Day celebrations

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, On January 1, 1980, Juneteenth became an official state holiday in Texas through the efforts of Al Edwards, an African American former member of the Texas House of Representatives. That bill marked

Juneteenth as the first emancipation celebration granted official state recognition. Representative Edwards has since actively sought to spread the observance of Juneteenth all across America; and

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

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

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

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

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

Senate Resolution No. 81 read and adopted by the Senate June 23, 2016.

Attest: _____
Secretary of the Senate