

MOTION OF THE COUNCIL OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY

Urging the United States Congress to recognize Juneteenth National Freedom Day as a national holiday or national day of observance with all deliberate speed.

Whereas, originating in Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865, when slaves in that state learned from Union General Gordon Granger that they had been freed nearly two and one half years after the Emancipation Proclamation had been signed by President Lincoln, "Juneteenth National Freedom Day" is the oldest African-American holiday observance in the United States.; and

Whereas, "Juneteenth National Freedom Day" commemorates the survival instinct of Africans who endured a transatlantic journey, known as the Middle Passage, on slave ships from their homeland to this country; and

Whereas, approximately 11.5 million Africans survived the harsh voyage to slave markets in the New World, and the slave population in America grew quickly; and

Whereas, "Juneteenth National Freedom Day" further commemorates the impact of slavery, the abolition movement and African-American emancipation in the United States and has become a traditional celebration of independence, human rights and African-American culture in many communities; and

Whereas, first celebrated on a small scale in 1866, Juneteenth became more broadly celebrated in the 1920s and 1930s, and this trend has continued more recently; and

Whereas, although Congress did recognize the existence of Juneteenth in 1997 through Senate Joint Resolution 11 and House Joint Resolution 56, and the Senate passed a simple resolution in honor of the day in 2018, neither of these actions had the force of law in formally recognizing the day as a Federal holiday or national day of observance; and

Whereas, official recognition of "Juneteenth National Freedom Day" as a Federal holiday or national day of observance would encourage all governmental entities, civic organizations, schools and institutions of higher education to observe the day in a manner that emphasizes the meaning and importance of the end of slavery in the United States and to recognize and celebrate the importance of this day to every person who cherishes liberty and equality for all people; and

Whereas, while first recognized as a holiday at the state level by Texas in 1979, as of June of 2020, "Juneteenth National Freedom Day" is recognized as a holiday in every state except Hawaii, North Dakota and South Dakota, according to the Congressional Research Service; and

The Council of the County of Allegheny therefore hereby moves as follows:

That the Congress of the United States is hereby urged to enact legislation recognizing Juneteenth National Freedom Day as a Federal holiday or national day of observance with all deliberate speed.

PRIMARY SPONSORS: COUNCIL MEMBER FUTULES

***CO-SPONSORS: COUNCIL MEMBERS DUERR, HALLAM, and BENNETT and
PRESIDENT CATENA***

Read and approved in Council, this _____ day of _____, 2020,

Council Agenda No. _____

**Patrick Catena
President of Council**

Attest: _____
**Jared E. Barker, Chief Clerk
Allegheny County Council**