

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, recognizing Juneteenth is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States and should be recognized as a day when freedom for all Americans is celebrated; and

Whereas, although the Emancipation Proclamation, which ended slavery in the South was signed by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863, it wasn't enforced in many places until after the Civil War ended in 1865. It took several years for it to become a reality for hundreds of thousands of enslaved African Americans the word being spread slowly or was outright resisted; and

Whereas, it was on June 19, 1865 when Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger and his Union troops arrived at Galveston, Texas, to share the news that the war was over and the Emancipation Proclamation that declared the enslaved were now free; and

Whereas, from its Galveston, Texas origin in 1865, the observance of June 19th as the African American Emancipation Day has spread across the United States and beyond. Today Juneteenth commemorates African American freedom and emphasizes education and achievement; and

Whereas, Juneteenth is a commemorative showcase of the strength of every American spirit to overcome a wrong and set about making it right; 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**