

FINAL BILL REPORT

HB 1870

C 61 L 07

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Recognizing Juneteenth as a day of remembrance.

Sponsors: By Representatives Pedersen, Ross, Lovick, Bailey, Hunt, Hasegawa, Pettigrew, Skinner, Flannigan, Darneille, Roberts, Newhouse, Hankins, Walsh, Appleton, Santos, Lantz, McCoy, Rodne, Schual-Berke, Ormsby, Upthegrove, Morrell, Kessler, Williams, Kenney, McDermott and Chase.

House Committee on State Government & Tribal Affairs
Senate Committee on Government Operations & Elections

Background:

Juneteenth celebrations date back to 1865 when on June 19, Union soldiers, led by Major General Gordon Granger, landed at Galveston, Texas with news that the war had ended and the slaves were free. This was two and a half years after President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation became official on January 1, 1863.

The celebration of June 19 was soon coined "Juneteenth" and grew with participation from slaves' descendants. Indeed, Juneteenth continued to be highly revered in Texas, with many former slaves and descendants making an annual pilgrimage back to Galveston. Initially, Juneteenth was not celebrated outside African American communities. Most of the festivities were in rural areas around rivers and creeks that could provide for additional activities such as fishing, horseback riding and barbecues. Often church grounds were used for Juneteenth celebrations.

Juneteenth began to gain prominence during the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. In 1968, the Reverend Ralph Abernathy celebrated Juneteenth at the Poor Peoples March to Washington D.C. Many of those attending returned home and initiated Juneteenth celebrations in areas previously absent of such activity. The Juneteenth celebrations in Milwaukee and Minneapolis, which are two of the largest celebrations, were founded after the Poor Peoples March of 1968.

On January 1, 1980, Juneteenth became an official state holiday in Texas. It is considered a "partial staffing holiday" meaning that state offices do not close but some employees use a floating holiday to take the day off. Thirteen other states list it as an official holiday, including New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Alaska, and California. However, some of these states, such as Connecticut, do not consider it a legal holiday and do not close government offices in observance of the occasion. Its informal observance has spread to other states, including Alabama, with a few celebrations taking place in other countries.

Summary:

June 19 is declared as a day of remembrance for the day the slaves learned of their freedom and will be recognized as Juneteenth.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	94	0
Senate	48	0

Effective: July 22, 2007