
**State Government & Tribal
Affairs Committee**

HB 1870

Brief Description: Recognizing Juneteenth as a day of remembrance.

Sponsors: 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.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes June 19th as Juneteenth, a day of remembrance for the day the slaves learned of their freedom.

Hearing Date: 2/20/07

Staff: Colleen Kerr (786-7168).

Background:

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

The celebration of June 19th was soon coined "Juneteenth" and grew with participation from descendants. Juneteenth continued to be highly revered in Texas, with many former slaves and descendants making an annual pilgrimage back to Galveston. Initially, however, 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 the church grounds were used for Juneteenth celebrations.

Juneteenth began to gain prominence during the Civil Rights movement of the 1950's and 60's. In 1968, the Reverend Ralph Abernathy celebrated Juneteenth at the Poor Peoples March to

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Washington D.C. Many of these attendees 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. In Texas it is considered a "partial staffing holiday" meaning that state offices do not close but some employees will be using 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 some other states, including Alabama, with a few celebrations even taking place in other countries.

Summary of Bill:

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

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.