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Juneteenth: Fact Sheet

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SUMMARY

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Juneteenth: Fact Sheet

Juneteenth celebrates the end of slavery in the United States. It is also known as Emancipation Day, Freedom Day, Jubilee Day, Juneteenth Independence Day, and Black Independence Day. On June 19, 1865, Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, TX, and announced the end of the civil war and the end of slavery. Although the Emancipation Proclamation came 2½ years earlier on January 1, 1863, many enslavers continued to hold enslaved Black people captive after the announcement, and Juneteenth became a symbolic date representing African-American freedom.

Juneteenth became a federal holiday on June 17, 2021. Forty-nine states and the District of Columbia recognize Juneteenth as a holiday or observance.

This fact sheet assists congressional offices with work related to Juneteenth. It contains sample speeches and remarks from the *Congressional Record*, presidential proclamations and remarks, and selected historical and cultural resources.

Contents

Introduction 1
History 1
Legislation 1
Federal Holiday Legislation 2
116th Congress 2
117th Congress 2
State Legislation 2
Sample Congressional Speeches and Recognitions 5
Presidential Proclamations and Remarks 5
Historical and Cultural Resources 6
Related CRS Report 6

Tables

Table 1. States That Commemorate or Observe Juneteenth 3

Contacts

Author Information 6

Introduction

Juneteenth celebrates the end of slavery in the United States. It is also known as Emancipation Day, Freedom Day, Jubilee Day, Juneteenth Independence Day, and Black Independence Day. On June 19, 1865, Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, TX, and announced the end of the Civil War and the end of slavery. Although the Emancipation Proclamation came 2½ years earlier on January 1, 1863, many enslavers continued to hold enslaved Black people captive after the announcement, so Juneteenth became a symbolic date representing African American freedom.

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History

June 19, 1865, marks the date that Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, TX, and announced the end of both the Civil War and slavery. His announcement, General Order Number 3, reads as follows:

> The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property, between former masters and slaves and the connection heretofore existing between them, becomes that between employer and hired labor. The Freedmen are advised to remain at their present homes and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at military posts; and they will not be supported in idleness either there or elsewhere.

The 1865 date is largely symbolic. The Emancipation Proclamation, issued by President Abraham Lincoln, had legally freed slaves in Texas on January 1, 1863, almost 2½ years earlier. Even after the general order, some slave masters withheld the information from their enslaved people, holding them enslaved through one more harvest season.

Texans celebrated Juneteenth beginning in 1866 with community-centric events, such as parades, cookouts, prayer gatherings, historical and cultural readings, and musical performances. Over time, communities have developed their own traditions. Some communities purchased land for Juneteenth celebrations, such as Emancipation Park in Houston, Texas. As families emigrated from Texas to other parts of the United States, they carried Juneteenth celebrations with them.

On January 1, 1980, Juneteenth officially became a Texas state holiday. Al Edwards, a freshman state representative, put forward the bill, H.B. 1016, making Texas the first state to grant this emancipation celebration. Since then, the federal government, 49 other states, and the District of Columbia have also commemorated or recognized the day.

Legislation

The first known official movement to make Juneteenth a federal holiday began in 1994,[1] and the first congressional resolution recognizing Juneteenth Independence Day was introduced in the

[1] National Juneteenth Observance Foundation, *History of the Modern Juneteenth Movement*, https://nationaljuneteenth.com/Juneteenth_Movement.html.

105th Congress in 1997.[2] The Senate and House of Representatives have since introduced resolutions recognizing Juneteenth annually.

Recent Senate resolutions:

S.Res. 253 (116th Congress)

S.Res. 547 (115th Congress)

S.Res. 214 (115th Congress)

S.Res. 500 (114th Congress)

House of Representatives resolutions:

H.Res. 450 (116th Congress)

H.Res. 948 (115th Congress)

H.Res. 386 (115th Congress)

H.Res. 787 (114th Congress)

Federal Holiday Legislation

116th Congress

H.Res. 1001, to recognize June 19 as Juneteenth Independence Day, was introduced on June 15, 2020.[3] The resolution garnered 214 co-sponsors, and it led to the introduction of the first Juneteenth National Independence Day Act (H.R. 7232) on June 18, 2020. A subsequent Senate bill (S. 4019) was introduced on June 22, 2020. Neither bill was considered for a vote.

117th Congress

On February 25, 2021, H.R. 1320 and S. 475 were both introduced to establish Juneteenth as a federal holiday. S. 475 passed the Senate by unanimous consent on June 15, 2021, and it passed the House by a vote of 415-14 on June 16, 2021. The bill was signed into law on June 17, 2021,[4] and Juneteenth became the 12th federal holiday. Juneteenth National Independence Day is the first holiday to be added to the list of federal holidays since the recognition of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's birthday in 1983.

State Legislation

In addition to the federal government recognizing Juneteenth as a federal holiday, 49 states and the District of Columbia have passed legislation recognizing it as a holiday or observance. In Texas, New York, Virginia, Washington, and Illinois, Juneteenth is an official paid holiday for state employees.

[2] S.J.Res. 11

[3] House Rule XII, Clause 5 prohibits date-specific commemorative legislation, and the passage of H.Res. 1001 required waiving House Rule XII by unanimous consent.

[4] P.L. 117-17, June 17, 2021; 5 U.S.C. §6103(a).

Table 1. States That Commemorate or Observe Juneteenth

State	Year of Recognition	Citation
Alabama	2011	2011 Ala. Adv. Legis. Serv. 398 (LexisNexis)
Alaska	2001	**Alaska Stat. §44.12.090 (2001)**
Arizona	2016	**Ariz. Rev. Stat. §1-315 (LexisNexis 2016)**
Arkansas	2005	**Ark. Code Ann. §1-5-114 (2005)**
California	2003	**Cal. Gov't Code §6719 (Deering 2003)**
Colorado	2004	**H.J.Res. 04-1027, 64th Gen. Assemb., 2nd Reg. Sess. (Co. 2004)**
Connecticut	2003	**Conn. Gen. Stat. §10-29a(a)(48) (2003)**
Delaware	2000	**Del. Code Ann. tit. 1, §604 (2000)**
District of Columbia	2003	Res. 160, 15th Counsel, 2003 D.C.
Florida	1991	**Fla. Stat. §683.21(1991)**
Georgia	2011	S.Res. 164, 151st Gen. Assemb., Reg. Sess (Ga. 1991)
Hawaii	2021	**S.B. 939 H.D.2 C.D.1 (2021)**
Idaho	2001	**S.Con.Res. 101, 56th Leg., Reg. Sess. (Idaho 2001)**
Illinois	2003	**5 Ill. Comp. Stat. 490/63 (2003)**[a]
Indiana	2010	H.Con.Res. 38, 116th Gen. Assemb., 2d Reg. Sess. (Ind. 2010)
Iowa	2002	**Iowa Code §1C.14 (2002)**
Kansas	2007	S.Res. 1860, 82nd Leg., Reg. Sess. (Kan. 2007)
Kentucky	2005	**Ky. Rev. Stat. §2.147 (LexisNexis 2005)**
Louisiana	2003	**La. Stat. Ann. §1:58:2 (2003)**
Maine	2011	**Me. Stat. tit. 1, §150-H (2011)**
Maryland	2014	**Md. Code Ann., Gen. Prov. §7-411 (LexisNexis 2014)**
Massachusetts	2007	**Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 6, §15BBBBB (2007)**[b]
Michigan	2005	**Mich. Comp. Laws §435.361 (2005)**
Minnesota	1996	**Minn. Stat. §10.55 (1996)**
Mississippi	2010	S.Con.Res. 605, 2010 Leg., Reg. Sess. (Miss. 2010)
Missouri	2003	**Mo. Rev. Stat. §9.161 (2003)**
Montana	2017	**Mont. Code Ann. §1-1-231 (2017)**
Nebraska	2009	Leg.Res. 75, 101st Leg., Reg. Sess. (Neb. 2009)
Nevada	2011	**Nev. Rev. Stat. §236.033 (2011)**
New Hampshire	2019	**N.H. Rev. Stat. Ann. §14:13-z (LexisNexis 2019)**
New Jersey	2004	**N.J. Rev. Stat. §36:2-80 (2004)**[c]
New Mexico	2006	**N.M. Stat. Ann. §12-5-14 (2006)**
New York	2004	**N.Y. Exec. Law §168-a(3) (LexisNexis 2004)**[d]
North Carolina	2007	2007 N.C. Sess. Laws 450

State	Year of Recognition	Citation
North Dakota	2021	**S.B. 2232, 67th Leg. Assemb., Reg. Sess (2021)**
Ohio	2006	**Ohio Rev. Code Ann. §5.2234 (LexisNexis 2006)**
Oklahoma	1994	**Okla. Stat. tit. 25, §82.4 (1994)**
Oregon	2001	**S.J.Res. 31, 71st Leg. Assemb. (Or. 2001)**[e]
Pennsylvania	2019	**2019 Pa. ALS 9**
Rhode Island	2012	S.B. 2262, 2011-2012 Leg. Sess. (R.I. 2011)[f]
South Carolina	2008	**S.C. Code Ann. §53-3-85 (2008)**
Tennessee	2007	2007 Bill Text TN H.J.R. 170
Texas	1980	**Tex. Gov't Code Ann. §662.003 (LexisNexis 1999)**[g]
Utah	2016	**Utah Code Ann. §63G-1-401(1)(g) (LexisNexis 2016)**
Vermont	2007	**Vt. Stat. Ann. tit. 1, §375 (2007)**
Virginia	2007	**H.Res. 56, 2007 Sess. (Va. 2007)**[h]
Washington	2007	**Wash. Rev. Code §1.16.050(7)(l) (2007)**[i]
West Virginia	2008	**H.Res. 19, 78th Leg., 2d Sess. (W. Va. 2008)**
Wisconsin	2009	**Wis. Stat. §995.20 (2009)**
Wyoming	2003	**Wyo. Stat. Ann. §8-4-107 (2003)**

Source: Table compiled by the Congressional Research Service (CRS).

Notes: This table includes the first instance of a state's recognition of Juneteenth or the first legislation that established Juneteenth as a state holiday. It excludes legislation adopted by states after the initial observation year. For example, Kansas adopted multiple resolutions, such as S. Res. 1866 (2007), S. Res. 1888 (2009), S. Res. 1865 (2011), and S. Res. 1754 (2015), subsequent to the original commemoration.
Bolded legislation citations denote that the legislation established Juneteenth as a state holiday. This includes days of observance and does not necessarily mean that they are legal holidays. Nonbolded legislation citations are commemorations or recognitions of the day's significance.
States without links do not have publicly available versions of the bill or resolution online. Copies can be found on Lexis Advanced. Congressional clients also may request copies from CRS.

a. See also S.B. 1965, 102nd Reg. Sess. (Ill. 2021) designating Juneteenth as a paid state holiday.
b. See also H. 4802, amend. 81, 192nd Gen. Court (Mass. 2020) designating Juneteenth as a permanent state holiday.
c. See also S.19, 219th Leg. (N.J. 2020) permanently recognizing the third Friday in June as a state holiday.
d. See also S. 8598/A. 10628, 2019-2020 Leg. Sess. (N.Y. 2020) recognizing June 19, 2020, as an official public holiday.
e. See also H.B. 2168, 2021 Reg. Sess. (Ore. 2021) establishing Juneteenth as a legal state holiday.
f. See also S. B. 169, 2013-2014 Leg. Sess. (R.I. 2013) establishing the recognition of Juneteenth annually.
g. See also H.B. 1016, 66th Reg. Sess. (Tex. 1980).
h. See also H. J. Res. 5074A, 2006 Spec. Sess. (Va. 2006) commending celebrations and 2020 Bill Text VA E.O. 25 establishing Juneteenth as a permanent state holiday.
i. See also H.B. 1016, 2021 Reg. Sess. (Wash. 2021) establishing Juneteenth as a paid holiday for state employees.

Sample Congressional Speeches and Recognitions

Members of Congress often make floor statements, issue press releases, or enter Extensions of Remarks into the *Congressional Record* to recognize federal holidays and observances. The following are some recent examples that may be of assistance in preparing such statements:

Representative Sheila Jackson Lee, "Celebrating Juneteenth," remarks in the House, *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 167 (June 14, 2021), pp. H2728-H2736.

Representative Sheila Jackson Lee, "The 2020 Observance of the Historical Significance of Juneteenth Independence Day," Extension of Remarks, *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 166 (June 30, 2020), pp. E590-E591.

Senator Benjamin L. Cardin, "Juneteenth," remarks in the Senate, *Congressional Record,* daily edition, vol. 166 (June 18, 2020), pp. S3098-S3099.

Representative Antonio Delgado, "Recognizing Juneteenth," Extensions of Remarks, *Congressional Record,* daily edition, vol. 165 (June 19, 2019), p. E769.

Senators Bill Nelson and Cory Booker, "Juneteenth Independence Day," remarks in the Senate, *Congressional Record,* daily edition, vol. 164 (June 19, 2018), pp. S4032-S4033.

Representative Sheila Jackson Lee, "Commemorating Juneteenth," remarks in the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 162 (June 19, 2018), pp. H5274-H5275.

Representative Brian Babin, "Celebrating Juneteenth 2017," Extensions of Remarks, *Congressional Record*, daily edition vol. 163 (June 15, 2017), p. E828.

Senator Harry Reid, "Celebrating Juneteenth," remarks in the Senate, *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 162 (June 16, 2016), p. S4258.

Representative Jeb Hensarling, "Hensarling Commemorates Juneteenth," press release, June 19, 2015.

Representative Julia Brownley, "Recognizing Ventura County's 24th Annual Juneteenth Celebration," Extensions of Remarks, *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 160 (June 19, 2014), p. E1023.

Presidential Proclamations and Remarks

One of the many uses of a presidential proclamation is to ceremoniously honor a group or call attention to certain issues or events. Some proclamations and remarks commemorating Juneteenth from the *Compilation of Presidential Documents* include the following:

Statements by the President—Joseph R. Biden Jr. (2021-)[5]

Statements and Messages by the President—Donald J. Trump (2018- 2021)

Statements by the President—Barack H. Obama (2010-2017)

Messages from the President—George W. Bush (2002-2009)

[5] As of the cover date of this report, the June 18, 2021, proclamation by President Biden was not yet available in the *Compilation of Presidential Documents* collection on the Government Publishing Office website. Until it is, you can access the proclamation from the official White House website.

Addresses and Remarks—William J. Clinton (1994-2001)

Historical and Cultural Resources

Numerous resources provide information on the history and culture of the holiday, including the following:

National Museum of African American History & Culture, "The Historical Legacy of Juneteenth." This blog post provides a brief history of Juneteenth.

Smithsonian, "Juneteenth: Our Other Independence Day." This blog post includes pictures of Major General George Granger and the house from which he read General Order No 3.

Library of Congress, "Juneteenth." This blog post includes links to several interviews with former enslaved about their memories of gaining their freedom.

Library of Congress, "Voices Remembering Slavery: Freed People Tell Their Stories." This collection houses oral histories of 23 formerly enslaved recorded between 1932 and 1975.

Texas State Historical Association, "Juneteenth." A longer narrative of the history of Juneteenth.

National Archives and Records Administration, "National Archives Safeguards Original 'Juneteenth' General Order." Short blog post that includes an image of handwritten General Order No. 3.

National Archives and Records Administration, "The Emancipation Proclamation." The original, handwritten document.

New York Times, "How we Juneteenth." An interactive collection of historical photos, poetry, articles celebrating Juneteenth.

New York Times, "Hot Links and Red Drinks: The Rich Food Tradition of Juneteenth."

Related CRS Report

CRS Report R43539, *Commemorations in Congress: Options for Honoring Individuals, Groups, and Events*, coordinated by Jacob R. Straus.

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