

2014 -- S 3131

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2014

SENATE RESOLUTION

RECOGNIZING "JUNETEENTH NATIONAL FREEDOM DAY" ON JUNE 19 OF EACH
YEAR

Introduced By: Senator Harold M. Metts

Date Introduced: June 20, 2014

Referred To: Recommended for Immediate Consideration

1 WHEREAS, First observed one hundred and forty-nine years ago, Juneteenth National
2 Freedom Day is the oldest and only African-American holiday observance in the United States;
3 and

4 WHEREAS, Also known as Emancipation Day, Emancipation Celebration, Freedom
5 Day, Jun-Jun, and Juneteenth, Juneteenth National Freedom Day commemorates the strong
6 survival instinct of African-Americans who were first brought to this country stacked in the
7 bottom of slave ships in a month-long journey across the Atlantic Ocean known as the Middle
8 Passage; and

9 WHEREAS, Approximately eleven and one-half million African-Americans survived the
10 voyage to the New World, with the number that died likely greater, and those who did survive
11 were subjected to whipping, castration, branding, and rape, and were forced to submit to slavery
12 for more than two hundred years after their arrival in the United States; and

13 WHEREAS, Events in the history of the United States that led to the Civil War of 1861
14 centered around sectional differences between the North and South that were based on the
15 economic and social divergence caused by the existence of slavery; and

16 WHEREAS, Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated as President of the United States in 1861,
17 and as President, Lincoln believed and stated that the paramount object of the Civil War was to
18 save the Union rather than to save or destroy slavery; and

19 WHEREAS, But Lincoln also stated his belief that all men everywhere should be free,

1 thus adding to the growing anticipation of slaves that their ultimate liberation was at hand; and

2 WHEREAS, In 1862, the first clear sign that the end of slavery was imminent came when
3 laws abolishing slavery in the territories of Oklahoma, Nebraska, Colorado, and New Mexico
4 were passed; and

5 WHEREAS, In September of that same year, President Lincoln warned the eleven
6 rebellious Confederate States that if they did not return to the Union by January 1, 1863, he
7 would declare their slaves forever free via the celebrated Emancipated Proclamation; and

8 WHEREAS, Enforcement of the Emancipation Proclamation, however, only occurred in
9 Confederate States once they were under Union Army control and Congress subsequently passed
10 the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution on January 31, 1865, abolishing slavery
11 throughout the United States and its territories; and

12 WHEREAS, News of this action reached the states at different times, and it was not until
13 June 19 of 1865, that the message of freedom reached the slaves in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana,
14 Arkansas, and California; and

15 WHEREAS, Spontaneous celebrations erupted throughout the country when African-
16 Americans learned of their freedom; and

17 WHEREAS, Juneteenth National Freedom Day celebrates the abolishment of slavery
18 with excitement and great joy and is a reminder to all Americans of the status and importance that
19 Americans of African descent hold as American citizens; now, therefore be it

20 RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
21 hereby urges the citizens of the State of Rhode Island to recognize the historical significance of
22 Juneteenth Independence Day and to observe Juneteenth National Freedom Day on June 19th; and
23 be it further

24 RESOLVED, That this Senate supports the annual celebration of Juneteenth National
25 Freedom Day in order to provide an opportunity for the people of the state to learn more about
26 our country's past and to better understand the experiences that have shaped our nation; and be it
27 further

28 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and he hereby is authorized and directed to
29 transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to the Governor of the State of Rhode Island and
30 Reverend Ronald V. Myers, Sr., M.D.

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