

2020 -- H 8083

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2020

A N A C T

RELATING TO HOLIDAYS AND DAYS OF SPECIAL OBSERVANCE

Introduced By: Representative Anastasia P. Williams

Date Introduced: June 24, 2020

Referred To: House Special Legislation

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Findings of fact.

2 The General Assembly finds "Juneteenth National Freedom Day" commemorates the news
3 of liberation of slaves which came to Texas more than two years after President Abraham Lincoln's
4 Emancipation Proclamation went into effect on January 1, 1863; African Americans across the state
5 were made aware of their right to freedom on June 19, 1865, when Major General Gordon Granger
6 arrived in Galveston with federal troops to read General Order No. 3 announcing the end of the
7 Civil War and that all enslaved people were now free, as well as to maintain a presence in Texas
8 for the purpose of enforcement of emancipation among slave owners throughout the state; and

9 The General Assembly finds, Rhode Island has a tradition of acknowledging significant
10 milestones in advancing the cause of freedom, and Rhode Islanders, some of whom descend
11 directly from those brave men and women that gained freedom on that day, join in celebrating the
12 155th anniversary of Juneteenth, an observance that commemorates the official announcement
13 made in the State of Texas regarding the abolition of slavery and the freeing of some quarter-million
14 African Americans; and

15 The General Assembly finds, the observance of Juneteenth honors the history,
16 perseverance, and achievements of African Americans, and celebrates America's progress and
17 continuing commitment to realizing the principles of liberty and equality upon which our nation
18 was founded; and

19 The General Assembly finds, this observance is a reminder of the hardships and losses

1 suffered by African Americans in their struggle to attain freedom, and we pay tribute to the memory
2 of those who made the ultimate sacrifice in this quest; through their experiences and those of others
3 who were successful in achieving victory, we find among the most poignant and valuable lessons
4 of humankind that continue to resonate with people of all backgrounds.

5 SECTION 2. Section 25-1-1 of the General Laws in Chapter 25-1 entitled "Holidays" is
6 hereby amended to read as follows:

7 **25-1-1. General holidays enumerated.**

8 The first day of January or, in the event that day is a Saturday or Sunday, then state
9 employees will celebrate the holiday on the following Monday (as New Year's Day), the third
10 Monday of January (as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday), the third Monday of February (as
11 Washington's Birthday), the fourth day of May (as Rhode Island Independence Day), the last
12 Monday of May (as Memorial Day), [the nineteenth day of June \(as Juneteenth National Freedom](#)
13 [Day\)](#), the fourth day of July or, in the event that day is a Saturday or Sunday, then state employees
14 will celebrate the holiday on the following Monday (as Independence Day), the second Monday of
15 August (as Victory Day), the first Monday of September (as Labor Day), the second Monday of
16 October (as Columbus Day), the eleventh day of November or, in the event that day is a Saturday
17 or Sunday, then state employees will celebrate the holiday on the following Monday (as Veterans'
18 Day), the twenty-fifth day of December, or in the event that day is a Saturday or Sunday, then state
19 employees will celebrate the holiday on the following Monday (as Christmas Day), and each of the
20 above days in every year, or when either of the above days falls on the first day of the week, then
21 the day following it, the Tuesday next after the first Monday in November in each year in which a
22 general election of state officers is held (as election day), the first day of every week (commonly
23 called Sunday), and any other days as the governor or general assembly of this state or the president
24 or the congress of the United States shall appoint as holidays for any purpose, days of thanksgiving,
25 or days of solemn fast, shall be holidays.

26 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
A N A C T
RELATING TO HOLIDAYS AND DAYS OF SPECIAL OBSERVANCE

- 1 This act would create the nineteenth day in June a state holiday entitled Juneteenth National
- 2 Freedom Day to commemorate the news of liberation of slaves.
- 3 This act would take effect upon passage.

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