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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

SENATE RESOLUTION

RECOGNIZING "JUNETEENTH NATIONAL FREEDOM DAY" ON JUNE 19, 2025

Introduced By: Senators Mack, Ujifusa, Zurier, Lawson, and McKenney

Date Introduced: June 18, 2025

Referred To: Recommended for Immediate Consideration

1           WHEREAS, Juneteenth originated in Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865, in celebration  
2   of the emancipation of those who had been enslaved in America. The tradition of marking the end  
3   of slavery with Emancipation Day celebrations had an earlier beginning in South Carolina on  
4   January 1, 1863, in recognition of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. Even earlier  
5   celebrations of emancipation date back to when slavery was abolished throughout the British  
6   Empire on August 1, 1834; and

7           WHEREAS, Each year after 1834, on August 1, major emancipation celebrations were  
8   organized across the West Indies and American cities with free African heritage populations. The  
9   Rhode Island cities of Providence, Newport and East Providence were early sites for major  
10   Emancipation Day celebrations and festivals dating back to the 1850s. During the 20th century,  
11   tens of thousands of people attended Emancipation Day events at Roger Williams Park, Rocky  
12   Point, and Crescent Park; and

13          WHEREAS, Juneteenth is part of a number of emancipation celebrations that date back  
14   to the early 19th century, and on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023, the Rhode Island General Assembly passed  
15   legislation, which was signed into law on June 19th, declaring "Juneteenth National Freedom  
16   Day" to officially be a State Holiday; and

17          WHEREAS, Also known as Emancipation Day, Emancipation Celebration, Freedom  
18   Day, Jun-Jun, and Juneteenth, Juneteenth National Freedom Day commemorates the strong  
19   survival instinct of African Americans who were first brought to this country stacked in the  
20   bottom of slave ships in a month-long journey across the Atlantic Ocean known as the Middle

1 Passage; and

2 WHEREAS, Approximately eleven and a half million Africans survived the voyage to  
3 the New World, with the number that died likely greater, and those who did survive were  
4 subjected to whipping, castration, branding, and rape, and were forced to submit to slavery for  
5 more than two hundred years after their arrival in the United States; and

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

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

12 WHEREAS, Lincoln also stated that it was his belief that all men everywhere should be  
13 free, thus adding to the growing anticipation for slaves that their ultimate liberation was at hand;  
14 and

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

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

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

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

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

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

33 RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island hereby urges the citizens of  
34 the State of Rhode Island to join in recognizing the historical significance of Juneteenth

1 Independence Day and the observance of Juneteenth National Freedom Day on June 19<sup>th</sup>; and be  
2 it further

3 RESOLVED, That this Senate hereby supports the annual celebration of Juneteenth  
4 National Freedom Day in order to provide an opportunity for the people of the State to learn more  
5 about our country's past and to better understand the experiences that have shaped our nation; and  
6 be it further

7 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to  
8 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to the Honorable Daniel J. McKee, Governor of  
9 the State of Rhode Island.

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