



Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County, TN

Legislation Text

File #: RS2021-1005, **Version:** 1

A resolution recognizing June 19, 2021 as Juneteenth in Nashville and Davidson County and commemorating the end of slavery in the United States.

WHEREAS, Juneteenth, also known as “Juneteenth Independence Day,” “Emancipation Day,” “Emancipation Celebration,” and “Freedom Day,” recognizes the emancipation of those who were enslaved in the United States and is observed annually on June 19; and

WHEREAS, June 19, 1865 marks the date when the last enslaved African-Americans in America, approximately 250,000 people, were told they were free when General Gordon Granger rode into Galveston, Texas and issued General Order No. 3, almost two and a half years after President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation; and

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

WHEREAS, in 1862, the first clear signs that the end of slavery was imminent appeared when laws abolishing slavery were adopted in the territories of Oklahoma, Nebraska, Colorado, and New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, in September 1862, President Lincoln issued the celebrated Emancipation Proclamation, warning the rebellious Confederate states that he would declare their slaves “forever free” if those states did not return to the Union by January 1, 1863; and

WHEREAS, enforcement of the Emancipation Proclamation occurred only in Confederate states that were under Union Army control; and

WHEREAS, on January 31, 1865, Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, abolishing slavery throughout the United States and its territories; and

WHEREAS, spontaneous celebration erupted throughout the country when African Americans learned of their freedom; and

WHEREAS, for formerly enslaved African Americans, the Juneteenth celebration was a time for reassuring each other, praying, and gathering remaining family members together. Juneteenth continued to be highly revered in Texas decades later, with many former slaves and descendants making an annual pilgrimage back to Galveston on this date; and

WHEREAS, the observance of Juneteenth spread from Texas to the neighboring states of Louisiana, Arkansas, and Oklahoma, as well as Alabama, Florida, and California, where many African American Texans migrated; and

WHEREAS, Texas is widely considered the first state to begin Juneteenth celebrations, and informal observances have taken place there for over a century. Juneteenth has been an official state holiday in Texas since 1979, and since 2003, thirty-nine states including California and the District of Columbia, have recognized Juneteenth as either a state holiday or a state holiday observance; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth is a day, a week, and in some areas, a month marked with celebrations, guest speakers, family gatherings, and community festivals. It is a time for reflection, rejoicing, assessment, self-improvement, and planning for the future; and

WHEREAS, in Nashville and throughout Tennessee, Juneteenth activities are held to celebrate and support African American culture, art, music, food, and business; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth symbolizes freedom, celebrates the abolishment of slavery, and reminds all Americans of the significant contributions of African Americans to our society; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and proper that the Metropolitan Council recognizes the historical significance of Juneteenth and the important role that African Americans have played in the history of the United States.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY:

Section 1. That the Metropolitan Council hereby goes on record as declaring June 19, 2021 as Juneteenth in Nashville and Davidson County and encourages the people of Nashville and Davidson County to observe Juneteenth Independence Day with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs.

Section 2. This Resolution shall take effect from and after its adoption, the welfare of the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County requiring it.