

**From:** Paige Meadows [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Saturday, April 1, 2023 8:51 AM  
**To:** Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson <Sen.Elvi.Gray-Jackson@akleg.gov>; Besse Odom <Besse.Odom@akleg.gov>  
**Subject:** Letter in Support of SB 22

Good morning,

My name is Paige Meadows, and I am writing to express my support for SB 22 to declare Juneteenth a legal holiday in Alaska. Celebrating Juneteenth as a legal holiday in Alaska provides Alaskans with an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the end of slavery in the United States, and to acknowledge the contributions and history of Black Americans. It is also an opportunity to educate Alaskans about the history of slavery in the US and the challenges faced by Black Americans.

Although Alaska has a unique history with slavery due to it being purchased after slavery had been abolished in the US in 1865, celebrating Juneteenth as a state holiday has symbolic importance as it sends a message about the state's commitment to equity and inclusion. The government of Alaska does not do enough to celebrate or even acknowledge the history of Black Alaskans, so declaring Juneteenth a legal holiday seems like an obvious choice to make a step in the right direction. Thank you for bringing this bill forward, and thank you for reading.

---

Dear Members of the Alaska Legislature,

On Wednesday, 4/19, the Anchorage Central Labor Council voted unanimously to support SB 22, which would proclaim Juneteenth an Alaska state holiday.

Juneteenth is a day of profound meaning to Black workers, as it should be to all working people who cherish and defend the freedom to live our own lives, speak with our own voices and enjoy the fruits of our labor. Juneteenth reminds us that we are independent of those who hire us, who seek to control us and who view us as objects with costs instead of as human beings with inherent dignity and worth.

Juneteenth also presents an opportunity to call attention to the economic disparities that persist for Black Americans. Though explicit slavery has been abolished for more than 150 years, the exploitation of Black labor continues to this day through a systemically racist economy designed to promote wage disparity in the workplace and the chronic unemployment, underemployment and economic exploitation of Black people. America's labor movement must remain at the tip of the spear to uproot systemic racism in all forms if we seek to fully uphold our nation's promise of dignity for Black people.

We thank the sponsors of this bill and we urge the Alaska legislature to pass SB 22.

In solidarity,

Dennis Knebel, President

Brandon McGuire, Vice President

Dawn Bundick, Recording Secretary

AnnaBell Stevens, Treasurer

Sandra Thompson, Trustee

Billy Meers, Trustee



**From:** Isaac Pacor [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Wednesday, March 22, 2023 4:18 PM

**To:** Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson <Sen.Elvi.Gray-Jackson@akleg.gov>; Rep. Alyse Galvin <Rep.Alyse.Galvin@akleg.gov>

**Subject:** Senate Bill 22

Hi Senator Gray-Jackson and Representative Alvin,

I live on Williams St. and am writing in support of Senate Bill 22 (and hoping a companion bill can be introduced in the House) to make Juneteenth an official state holiday. Thank you Senator Gray-Jackson for creating this! We would love to see this make the House and pass in the Senate.

Happy Wednesday and thank you for representing us!

**From:** [Ashleigh](#)  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: Let's Do This!  
**Date:** Monday, February 13, 2023 5:43:36 PM

---

# **I am writing this letter in support of Senate bill 22. To make Juneteenth a state holiday.**

Juneteenth is of the utmost importance as it signified the end of slavery and indentured servitude among Black folks that built this country, The United States of America . Juneteenth is not only Black History. Juneteenth is American History and needs to be recognized as a holiday. I would ask that this a bill that needs to be passed .

Respectfully,  
Ashleigh Gaines  
Anchorage NAACP  
ACTSO chair

Sent from my iPhone

March 12, 2023

Sen. Elvi-Gray Jackson, District G  
Alaska State Capitol, Rm 30  
120 4th St.  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Honorable Senator Gray-Jackson,

Thank you for introducing Senate Bill 22, Proclaim Juneteenth Day a Holiday. I am writing to express my support for establishing June 19th as an official state holiday in Alaska.

The recognition of the contributions and sacrifices made by Black Americans after being emancipated in 1865 is considerably delayed. It has been over 150 years since the emancipation of Black Americans, and this official recognition would equate to a heavy sigh of relief. Having a day off for all Alaskans to rest and reflect is not only recognizing Black Alaskans, but also recognizing and honoring the history of the United States, and the richness and depth of this country. It is not enough to create a state holiday that commemorates the emancipation of peoples that were forced into slavery, but it is absolutely a necessary part of the process in acknowledging this traumatic and sobering part of U.S. history.

I am grateful that the Alaska State Legislature is considering a bill that would acknowledge and celebrate the efforts and dignity of Black Alaskans who have put in time and effort to make our state better. There are countless individuals who have contributed to the growth, vitality, and diversity of our communities. These Alaskans call themselves teachers, legislators, doctors, community organizers, executive directors, attorneys, mothers, fathers, business owners, psychologists, fishermen, construction workers, electricians, and life-long Alaskans. It is my hope that communities and individuals across Alaska, of all identities, acknowledge and witness the resiliency and richness of Black culture, and the dignity and fortitude of Black people. Black people are not slaves, Black people are brilliant, beautiful, and worthy. A positive outcome of this bill might be the beginning of fruitful conversations about what it means to recognize and celebrate the Juneteenth holiday as a non-Black person.

In order to ensure that no harm is done by creating Juneteenth as a state holiday, it would be important to make sure that service workers, or those who do not get to observe the holiday, still have public transportation options if they are required to be at work.

I respectfully urge the members of the Alaska State Legislature to vote in support of SB 22 and for Governor Dunleavy to sign this bill into law when it arrives on his desk before the end of the legislative session.

Sincerely,



Bernice Marie Nisbett, LPC  
UAA PhD Student, Clinical-Community Psychology  
District 20, Senate J Constituent

**From:** [Ms. Dawn Bundick](#)  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: Let's Do This!  
**Date:** Monday, February 13, 2023 3:08:32 PM

---

Hi Besse,

This is Dawn Bundick. I want to offer a letter of support for this bill.

My name is Dawn Bundick and I am a lifelong Alaskan and I am asking for your support of SB22. This day is recognized in other jurisdictions as holidays and President Biden has signed the bill enacting this a holiday in all States and I am asking that this be a holiday recognized in our State of Alaska for all governments, non-governmental agencies, etc..

Thank you,

Dawn Bundick  
NAACP Member  
N.O.B.L.E. Member  
VFW Auxiliary President  
American Legion Treasurer  
Union President/Member

**From:** Eric Gurley [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 4, 2023 10:00 AM  
**To:** senate.finance.committe@akleg.gov  
**Cc:** Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson <Sen.Elvi.Gray-Jackson@akleg.gov>  
**Subject:** SB22 Support for An Act Establishing Juneteenth as a Legal Holiday

Good morning, I am sorry I missed the public testimony as I was logging in with the phone operator, and the opportunity was closed.

I want to thank Senator Gray Jackson for leading this effort and moving this act forward.

I am Eric Gurley, I am the Executive Director of Access Alaska, I am calling from Anchorage, AK. I am an African-American that has been an Alaskan since 1975. I am the first African-American executive director of Access Alaska.

I am submitting this to support SB22, An Act Establishing Juneteenth as a legal holiday.

My career in non-profits across our state has allowed me to work in venues that facilitate equity and engagement. All Alaskans deserve to live deliberate, intentional, and purposeful lives. This has not been without effort, advocacy, without agitation.

Today, I lead many efforts of advocacy. Access Alaska is a Center for Independent Living. Our efforts assist individuals and families in improving their independence and helping Alaskans with disabilities, and seniors, remain in their own homes and communities. Access Alaska provides Centers for Independent Living support out of hub areas of our state, including but not limited to Anchorage, Fairbanks, and the Mat-Su Valley. We also serve Alaska's seniors in the North Slope, Bethel, and Dillingham areas. Persons experiencing disabilities and seniors include all people and all demographics. In 2020, my role helped Access Alaska incorporate diversity as a corporate value in recognizing our embrace of all peoples.

Listen, Juneteenth, or Freedom Day, has long been celebrated. In June of 2021, this celebration was thankfully made a federal holiday. Many businesses immediately recognized this as one of their established permanent holiday. Their employees can participate and reflect on the importance of this day commemorating the end of slavery in 1865. This is a significant part of our American history and what freedom and justice mean as we aspire to be what we say we want to be.

Many government entities already celebrate this day. I am asking in my support of SB22 that the State of Alaska adopt this date as an Alaskan Holiday to demonstrate our commitment to these auspices of freedom and justice. Please ensure this action moves forward.

Thank you for your time today and your consideration and support on this critical matter. This concludes my testimony.

Eric L. Gurley, MBA

Executive Director Access Alaska, Inc.  
1217 E. 10th Avenue Anchorage, AK 99501 [www.accessalaska.org](http://www.accessalaska.org)

**From:** [Jasmin Smith](#)  
**To:** [Besse Odom](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Juneteenth Testimony  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 1, 2023 1:55:31 PM  
**Attachments:** [image0.png](#)

---

>

> My name is Jasmin Smith and I am a lifelong Alaskan, Business Owner, Community coordinator, and president of Juneteenth Anchorage, and one of the founders of the Juneteenth Alaska Foundation.

>

> I am also including Sophia Metters, a lifelong Alaskan, business, owner, nonprofit leader, and Juneteenth and Anchorage vice president.

>

> I am writing in support of Senator Elvi Gray Jackson's efforts to make Juneteenth an official state of Alaska paid holiday.

>

> I can start this testimony by stressing how important Juneteenth is or by stating how Juneteenth is American history but I want to go deeper and local.

>

> Growing up African-American in Alaska can prove challenging and incredibly lonely at times. Having a deep love for the State But often times feeling like you do not fit in or know your place was a paramount theme of my childhood. I was raised in Eagle River Alaska where the number of African Americans was extremely low, and I found myself being exciting about going to Anchorage and various festivities that uplifted my experience, lenses, and culture.

>

> One of the highlights of my childhood was learning about and celebrating Juneteenth. Not just at a national level, but a statewide and local level as well. I think back to the various activities that shaped my mindset today and the leaders and the elders that came before me who taught me all about Juneteenth and its importance. Spending countless days outside learning our stories, learning our struggles, and learning how we overcame.

>

> Being taught that the core principles and theme was freedom, celebration, overcoming, and sense of self. Understanding what that meant and looked like for so many black Alaskans from our past and present. Understanding that the desire for freedom is universal, and there are many countries across the globe who celebrate their freedom, who celebrate overcoming, and who celebrated making it through adversity and coming out with a strong and beautiful culture. To me and many others that warrants being proud.

>

> Although the topic of slavery is painful and complicated, it is still an important part of our country's history that needs to be discussed, and remembered as a cautionary tale. As a reminder of how far we have come and as a reminder, if we do not work together and put in place the needed supports and education and legislation, we run the risk of repeating our past mistakes.

>

> We have an incredible opportunity to make it right and create a holiday that allows for thoughtful discussion, celebration, and a deeper collective understanding of our country and even our states complicated history.

>

> Adding this holiday will be a significant step in the right direction for not only our state workers, but our community members as a whole. It will show solidarity, inclusion, forward, thinking, and a willingness to have tough (but needed) conversations.

>



> I hope that this committee supports senator Elvi Gray Jackson's efforts because it is important and it is needed. What an amazing celebration and day our community could be having this year by knowing Juneteenth is a federal holiday, municipal holiday, and state of Alaska holiday.

>

> If you need anything else from me, please do not hesitate to ask. I will support in any way possible and know that our organization and committee does too.

>

> Jasmin Smith

> Juneteenth Anchorage President

> National Juneteenth observation foundation, Alaska delegate

>

> Sophia Metters

> Juneteenth Anchorage Vice President

>

> 907-230-4968

>



>

>

**DREAM** LIKE MARTIN  
**LEAD** LIKE HARRIET  
**FIGHT** LIKE MALCOLM  
**DARE** LIKE SHIRLEY  
**THINK** LIKE GARVEY  
**WRITE** LIKE MAYA  
**SPEAK** LIKE FREDERICK  
**INSPIRE** LIKE OBAMA  
**EDUCATE** LIKE W.E.B.  
**BELIEVE** LIKE THURGOOD  
**CHALLENGE** LIKE ROSA  
**WIN** LIKE KAMALA

**JUNETEENTH**

>

I strongly advocate for the passage of Alaska Senate Bill 22, which is sponsored by State Senator Evie Gray Jackson and proclaims Juneteenth as a paid state holiday. This legislation would recognize and honor the countless contributions made by African Americans throughout our nation's history, including over 200 years of free labor, pain, and suffering, as well as military and cultural contributions that have enriched American life for generations.

It's important to remember that African Americans endured the horrors of slavery for over 200 years, with laws and policies designed to ensure their perpetual enslavement. Even after the Civil War, we have endured continuous massacres in Memphis Tenn. and New Orleans, La. 1866, Camilla, Georgia, St Bernard Parish and Opelousas, La. 1868, Colfax, La. 1873, Eufaula, Al. and Vicksburg, Miss. 1874, Clinton, Miss. 1875, Thibodaux, La. 1887, Wilmington, NC. 1898, Atlanta, Ga. 1906, Springfield, Ill. 1908, Slocum, Tx. 1910, East St. Louis, Ill. 1917, Chicago, Ill., Elaine, Arkansas and Washington DC, 1919, Ocoee, Fl. 1920, Tulsa, Ok. 1921, Rosewood, Fl. 1923, Detroit, Michigan, 1943, Charleston, SC. 2015. latest Buffalo, NY. 2022. In face of all these atrocities, loss of family members and generational wealth,' Black Americans have made significant contributions to our nation's military, cultural, and scientific achievements, often in the face of great adversity. We have continued to fight for the security of our nation.

For example, African American soldiers fought bravely in the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and other conflicts, and were instrumental in helping the United States become a great power in the Spanish-American War, World War 1 and World War II. Many African Americans also made significant scientific and technological advances, including the invention of the home security system, gas heating furnace, gas mask, fiber optic cable, touchtone telephone, portable fax, caller id, call waiting, co-creator of the IBM computer, foundation for GPS, blood bank, automatic elevator doors, and traffic signal lights, among many others.

In addition to these contributions, African Americans have also enriched American culture with their musical and artistic talents. Gospel, Jazz, Rap, and Blues music are just a few examples of African American cultural achievements that have become beloved around the world. And in sports, African American athletes have broken barriers and paved the way for future generations, at the forefront Curt Flood in baseball, Tiger Woods in golf, the Williams sisters in tennis, and Michael Jordan in basketball.

Passing this legislation would be a small but meaningful step toward acknowledging and honoring the sacrifices and contributions of African Americans throughout our nation's history. Especially in Alaska where African American soldiers fought to remove the invading Japanese from the Aleutians islands in World War II and built the Alcan highway inside Alaska. Let's take this opportunity to move America closer to redemption from its original sin of slavery and ensure that future generations never forget the struggles and achievements of those who came before us and helped make America a great nation.

Ed Wesley, Military Veteran, 50 years Alaskan Resident

**From:** Lev Greenstein <[REDACTED]>

**Sent:** Monday, April 24, 2023 11:14 AM

**To:** Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson <Sen.Elvi.Gray-Jackson@akleg.gov>

**Subject:** Thank you for your leadership on SB22

Hi Senator Gray-Jackson,

I live in midtown Anc (I think your my rep!) and I just wanted to say thanks for the leadership around making Juneteenth a state holiday! It's important to have larger national history recognized in all the ways that it contributes to our community richness and uplifts Black history in Alaska!

That's all, I hope the senate isn't too crazy!

-Lev

**From:** Michaela Stith <[REDACTED]>

**Sent:** Sunday, April 23, 2023 5:47 PM

**To:** Sen. Elvi Gray-Jackson <Sen.Elvi.Gray-Jackson@akleg.gov>

**Subject:** Thank you

Dear Sen. Gray-Jackson,

I am a lifelong Alaskan reaching out to thank you for your work on SB22. Juneteenth should absolutely be a state holiday!

Kind regards,  
Michaela Stith