

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 21

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY THE HOUSE HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Introduced: 3/15/00

Referred: State Affairs

A RESOLUTION

1 **Recognizing and observing June 17, 2000, as Juneteenth Day.**

2 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

3 **WHEREAS** Juneteenth Day is the oldest and only African-American holiday
4 observance in the United States and commemorates the strong survival instinct of African-
5 Americans who were first brought to this country stacked in the bottom of slave ships in a
6 month-long journey across the Atlantic Ocean known as the Middle Passage; and

7 **WHEREAS** Juneteenth Day is more than 130 years old and is also known as
8 Emancipation Day, Emancipation Celebration Day, Freedom Day, and Jun-Jun Day; and

9 **WHEREAS** 11,500,000 African-Americans survived the voyage to the New World,
10 while the number that died is likely larger; and

11 **WHEREAS**, for more than 200 years after arrival in the United States, the African-
12 Americans who survived the voyage and their descendants were forced to submit to slavery;
13 and

14 **WHEREAS** events in the history of the United States that led to the Civil War in 1861
15 centered around regional differences between the northern and southern regions of the United
16 States, and these differences were based on economic and social factors that were aggravated
17 by the existence of slavery; and

1 **WHEREAS** Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated President of the United States in 1861,
2 and, although as President, Lincoln believed and stated that the paramount object of the Civil
3 War was to save the Union rather than to save or destroy slavery, Lincoln had stated his wish
4 that all persons everywhere could be free, and this increased the growing anticipation by
5 slaves that their ultimate liberation was at hand; and

6 **WHEREAS**, in 1862, the first clear signs that the end of slavery was imminent
7 appeared when the territories of Oklahoma, Nebraska, Colorado, and New Mexico passed laws
8 abolishing slavery; and

9 **WHEREAS**, in September, 1862, President Lincoln warned the 11 rebellious
10 confederate states that if they did not return to the Union by January 1, 1863, he would
11 declare their slaves free forever, and he subsequently issued an emancipation proclamation to
12 free the slaves; and

13 **WHEREAS**, in the confederate states, enforcement of the emancipation proclamation
14 only occurred after the confederate states were controlled by the Union army; and

15 **WHEREAS** the United States Congress subsequently passed the Thirteenth
16 Amendment to the Constitution of the United States on January 31, 1865, and this amendment
17 abolished slavery throughout the United States and its territories, including Alaska upon its
18 purchase in 1867; and

19 **WHEREAS** news of the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment reached the states at
20 different times, and it was not until June 19, 1865, that the message of freedom reached the
21 slaves in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Arkansas; spontaneous celebration erupted
22 throughout the country when African-Americans learned of their freedom; and

23 **WHEREAS** Juneteenth Day celebrations demonstrate that slaves hated slavery and
24 celebrated its abolition with excitement and great joy, and Juneteenth Day is a reminder to all
25 Americans of the status of Americans of African descent as American citizens and their
26 importance to this nation;

27 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature recognizes June 17, 2000, as
28 Juneteenth Day and urges all Alaskans to reflect on the suffering and sacrifice endured by
29 millions of early African-Americans and to appreciate the unique freedom and equality
30 enjoyed by all Alaskans today.