

HB

100

Alaska State Legislature

Session
State Capitol Building, Room 418
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182
Phone (907) 465-2995
Fax (907) 465-6592

Interim
716 West Fourth Avenue, Suite 430
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
Phone (907) 269-0250
Fax 9907) 269-0249



Chair, House Special Committee
on Economic Development, Trade
and Tourism

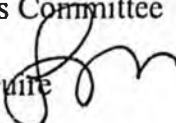
Chair, Joint House and Senate
Administrative Regulation and
Review Committee

Member
Resources Committee
Rules Committee

Representative Lesil McGuire *House District 17*

MEMORANDUM

TO: Senator Therriault
Chair, Senate State Affairs Committee

FROM: Representative Lesil McGuire 

DATE: February 20, 2001

RE: HB 100
"An Act establishing the third Saturday of each June as Juneteenth Day."

I respectfully request that HB 100 be scheduled for a hearing in the Senate State Affairs Committee.

Attached are the following back up:

1. Sponsor Statement
2. HB 100
3. Bill History
4. History of Juneteenth
5. Emancipation Proclamation

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me personally, or my staff Sue Stancliff at ext. #4695.

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Representative Lesil McGuire

House District 17

Sponsor Statement

HB 100

"An Act establishing the third Saturday of each June as Juneteenth Day."

Juneteenth is the oldest known celebration of the ending of slavery. From its Galveston, Texas origin in 1865, the observance of June 19th as the African American Emancipation Day has spread across the United States and beyond.

Today Juneteenth commemorates African American freedom and emphasizes education and achievement. It is a day, a week, and in some areas a month marked with celebrations, guest speakers, picnics and family gatherings. It is a time for reflection and rejoicing. It is a time for assessment, self-improvement, and for planning the future. In cities across the country, people of all races, nationalities and religions are joining hands to truthfully acknowledge a period in our history that shaped and continues to influence our society today. Only when sensitized to the conditions and experiences of others, then can we make significant and lasting improvements in our society.

Juneteenth Day has been celebrated in Anchorage on the Park strip for the past 8 years. Other states have recognized the value of celebrating this day as a nationally recognized holiday. This would be a non-paid holiday on the third Saturday of each June as the official day, and would be listed on the calendar. I respectfully urge your support in the effort in acknowledging and showing the appreciation of African American history and culture by passage of HB 100.

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
2001 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Fiscal Note Number 1
Bill Version HB 100
HB Publish Date 02/07/01

Revision Date/Time (Note if correction): _____ Dept. Affected: _____
Title: An Act Establishing the third BRU: _____
Saturday of each June as Juneteenth Day " Component: _____
Sponsor: McGuire _____
Requester: State Affairs Component Number: _____

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007
Personal Services						
Travel						
Contractual						
Supplies						
Equipment						
Land & Structures						
Grants & Claims						
Miscellaneous						
TOTAL OPERATING	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES						
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CHANGE IN REVENUES ()						
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FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1037 GF/Mental Health						
Other (Specify Type)						
TOTAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimate of any current year (FY2001) cost: 0.0

POSITIONS

Full-time						
Part-time						
Temporary						

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

Prepared by: Rynnieva Moss, Committee Aide Phone 465-3719
Division: House State Affairs Date/Time 2/6/01
Approved by: Rynnieva W. Moss Date _____
Agency _____

For distribution information, call the Governor's Legislative Office



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History of Juneteenth

What is Juneteenth?

Juneteenth is the oldest known celebration of the ending of slavery. Dating back to 1865, it was on June 19th that the Union soldiers, led by Major General Gordon Granger, landed at Galveston, Texas with news that the war had ended and that the enslaved were now free. Note that this was two and a half years after President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation - which had become official January 1, 1863. The Emancipation Proclamation had little impact on the Texans due to the minimal number of Union troops to enforce the new Executive order. However, with the surrender of General Lee in April of 1865, and the arrival of General Granger's regiment, the forces were finally strong enough to influence and overcome the resistance.

Later attempts to explain this two and a half year delay in the receipt of this important news have yielded several versions that have been handed down through the years. Often told is the story of a messenger who was murdered on his way to Texas with the news of freedom. Another, is that the news was deliberately withheld by the enslavers to maintain the labor force on the plantations. And still another, is that federal troops actually waited for the slave owners to reap the benefits of one last cotton harvest before going to Texas to enforce the Emancipation Proclamation. All or none of them could be true. For whatever the reason, conditions in Texas remained status quo well beyond what was statutory.

General Order Number 3

One of General Granger's first orders of business was to read to the people of Texas, General Order Number 3 which began most significantly with:

"The people of Texas are informed that in accordance with a Proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and free laborer."

The reactions to this profound news ranged from pure shock to immediate jubilation. While many lingered to learn of this new employer to employee relationship, many left before these offers were completely off the lips of their former 'masters' - attesting to the varying conditions on the plantations and the realization of freedom. Even with nowhere to go, many felt that leaving the plantation would be their first grasp of freedom. North was a logical destination and for many it represented true freedom, while the desire to reach family members in neighboring states drove the some into Louisiana, Arkansas and Oklahoma. Settling into these new areas as free men and women brought on new realities and the challenges of establishing a heretofore non-existent status for black people in America. Recounting the memories of that great day in June of 1865 and its festivities would serve as motivation as well as a release from the growing pressures encountered in their new territory. The celebration of June 19th was coined "Juneteenth" and grew with more participation from descendants. The Juneteenth celebration was a time for reassuring each other, for praying and for gathering remaining family members. 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.

Juneteenth Festivities and Food

A range of activities were provided to entertain the masses, many of which continue in tradition today. Rodeos, fishing, barbecuing and baseball are just a few of the typical Juneteenth activities you may witness today. Juneteenth almost always focused on education and self improvement. Thus often guest speakers are brought in and the elders are called upon to recount the events of the past. Prayer services were also a major part of these celebrations.

Certain foods became popular and subsequently synonymous with Juneteenth celebrations such as strawberry soda-pop. More traditional and just as popular was the barbecuing, through which Juneteenth participants could share in the spirit and aromas that their ancestors - the newly emancipated African Americans, would have experienced during their ceremonies. Hence, the barbecue pit is often established as the center of attention at Juneteenth celebrations.

Food was abundant because everyone prepared a *special* dish. Meats such as lamb, pork and beef which not available everyday were brought on this special occasion. A true Juneteenth celebrations left visitors well satisfied and with enough conversation to last until the next.

Dress was also an important element in early Juneteenth customs and is often still taken seriously, particularly by the direct descendants who can make the connection to this tradition's roots. During slavery there were laws on the books in many areas that prohibited or limited the dressing of the enslaved. During the initial days of the emancipation celebrations, there are accounts of former slaves tossing their ragged garments into the creeks and rivers to adorn clothing taken from the plantations belonging to their former 'masters'.

Juneteenth and Society

In the early years, little interest existed outside the African American community in participation in the celebrations. In some cases, there was outwardly exhibited resistance by barring the use of public property for the festivities. Most of the festivities found themselves out in rural areas around rivers and creeks that could provide for additional activities such as fishing, horseback riding and barbeques. Often the church grounds was the site for such activities. Eventually, as African Americans became land owners, land was donated and dedicated for these festivities. One of the earliest documented land purchases in the name of Juneteenth was organized by Rev. Jack Yates. This fund-raising effort yielded \$1000 and the purchase of Emancipation Park in Houston, Texas. In Mexia, the local Juneteenth organization purchased Booker T. Washington Park, which had become the Juneteenth celebration site in 1898. There are accounts of Juneteenth activities being interrupted and halted by white landowners demanding that their laborers return to work. However, it seems most allowed their workers the day off and some even made donations of food and money. For decades these annual celebrations flourished, growing continuously with each passing year. In Booker T. Washington Park, as many as 20,000 African Americans once flowed through during the course of a week, making the celebration one of the state's largest.

Juneteenth Celebrations Decline

Economic and cultural forces provided for a decline in Juneteenth activities and participants beginning in the early 1900's. Classroom and textbook education in lieu of traditional home and family-taught practices stifled the interest of the youth due to less emphasis and detail on the activities of former slaves. Classroom text books proclaimed Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863 as the date signaling the ending of

slavery - and little or nothing on the impact of General Granger's arrival on June 19th.

The Depression forced many people of the farms and into the cities to find work. In these urban environments, employers were less eager to grant leaves to celebrate this date. Thus, unless June 19th fell on a weekend or holiday, there were very few participants available. July 4th was the already established Independence holiday and a rise in patriotism steered more toward this celebration.

Resurgence

The Civil Rights movement of the 50's and 60's yielded both positive and negative results for the Juneteenth celebrations. While it pulled many of the African American youth away and into the struggle for racial equality, many linked these struggles to the historical struggles of their ancestors. This was evidenced by student demonstrators involved in the Atlanta civil rights campaign in the early 1960's, whom wore Juneteenth freedom buttons. Again in 1968, Juneteenth received another strong resurgence through Poor Peoples March to Washington D.C.. Rev. Ralph Abernathy's call for people all races, creeds, economic levels and professions to come to Washington to show support for the poor. Many of these attendees returned home and initiated Juneteenth celebrations in areas previously absent of such activity. In fact, two of the largest Juneteenth celebrations founded after this March are now held in Milwaukee and Minneapolis.

Texas Blazes the Trail

On January 1, 1980, Juneteenth became an official state holiday through the efforts of Al Edwards, an African American state legislator. The successful passage of this bill marked Juneteenth as the first emancipation celebration granted official state recognition.

Representative Edwards has since actively sought to spread the observance of Juneteenth all across America.

Juneteenth In Modern Times

Throughout the 80's and 90's Juneteenth has continued to enjoy a growing and healthy interest from communities and organizations throughout the country. Institutions such as the Smithsonian, the Henry Ford Museum and others have begun sponsoring Juneteenth-centered activities. In recent years, a number of National Juneteenth Organizations have arisen to take their place along side older organizations - all with the mission to promote and cultivate knowledge and appreciation of African American history and culture.

Juneteenth today, celebrates African American freedom while encouraging self-development and respect for all cultures. As it takes on a more national and even global perspective, the events of 1865 in Texas are not forgotten, for all of the roots tie back to this fertile soil from which a national day of pride is growing. The future of Juneteenth looks bright as the number of cities and states come on board and form local committees and organizations to coordinate the activities. Communication and networking is vital. A sharing of lessons learned throughout all organizations will help expedite this growth while minimizing waste and risks. The Juneteenth.com website can play a vital role in these efforts. Thus, it is important to communicate its existence to one and all. Contact your local Juneteenth organizer if you do not see them listed within and let them know about this site. There is no cost for organizations to post their Juneteenth festivities at the website.

Additional Juneteenth Reading

National Archives and Records Administration
Online Exhibit Hall

The Emancipation Proclamation

January 1, 1863

A Transcription

[Return]

By the President of the United States of America:

A Proclamation.

Whereas, on the twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

"That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

"That the Executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the States and parts of States, if any, in which the people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any State, or the people thereof, shall on that day be, in good faith, represented in the Congress of the United States by members chosen thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such State shall have participated, shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such State, and the people thereof, are not then in rebellion against the United States."

Now, therefore I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief, of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do publicly proclaimed for the full period of one hundred days, from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the States and

parts of States wherein the people thereof respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit:

Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, (except the Parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James Ascension, Assumption, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the City of New Orleans) Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia, (except the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Ann, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth[]), and which excepted parts, are for the present, left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

And by virtue of the power, and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this first day of
January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight
hundred and sixty three, and of the Independence of the
United States of America the eighty-seventh.

By the President: ABRAHAM LINCOLN
WILLIAM H. SEWARD, Secretary of State.

{Return}

Note: This transcription is taken from the *Introduction* by John Hope Franklin to *The Emancipation Proclamation : January 1, 1863. Washington, D.C. : National Archives and Records Administration, 1994. 14 pages. (Milestone documents in the National Archives)*

Ordering information for the Milestone Document
