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Juneteenth: Fact Sheet

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Devon Galena
Reference and Digital
Services Librarian

Juneteenth: Fact Sheet

Juneteenth celebrates the end of slavery in the United States. It is also known as Emancipation Day, Freedom Day, Jubilee Day, Juneteenth Independence Day, and Black Independence Day. On June 19, 1865, Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, TX, and announced the end of the civil war and the end of slavery. Although the Emancipation Proclamation came 2½ years earlier on January 1, 1863, many enslavers continued to hold enslaved Black people captive after the announcement, and Juneteenth became a symbolic date representing African-American freedom.

Juneteenth became a federal holiday on June 17, 2021. All 50 states and the District of Columbia recognize Juneteenth as a holiday or observance, and at least 22 states and the District of Columbia have designated Juneteenth as a permanent paid and/or legal holiday through legislation or executive action.

This fact sheet assists congressional offices with work related to Juneteenth. It contains sample speeches and remarks from the *Congressional Record*, presidential proclamations and remarks, and selected historical and cultural resources.

Introduction

Juneteenth celebrates the end of slavery in the United States. It is also known as Emancipation Day, Freedom Day, Jubilee Day, Juneteenth Independence Day, and Black Independence Day. On June 19, 1865, Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, TX, and announced the end of the Civil War and the end of slavery. Although the Emancipation Proclamation came 2½ years earlier on January 1, 1863, many enslavers continued to hold enslaved Black people captive after the announcement, so Juneteenth became a symbolic date representing African American freedom.

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History

June 19, 1865, marks the date that Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, TX, and announced the end of both the Civil War and slavery. His announcement, General Order Number 3, reads as follows:

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 personal rights and rights of property, between former masters and slaves and the connection heretofore existing between them, becomes that between employer and hired labor. The Freedmen are advised to remain at their present homes and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at military posts; and they will not be supported in idleness either there or elsewhere.

The Emancipation Proclamation, issued by President Abraham Lincoln, had legally freed the enslaved in Texas on January 1, 1863, almost 2½ years earlier. Even after the general order, some enslavers withheld the information from enslaved people, holding them enslaved through one more harvest season.

Texans celebrated Juneteenth beginning in 1866 with community-centric events, such as parades, cookouts, prayer gatherings, historical and cultural readings, and musical performances. Over time, communities have developed their own traditions. Some communities purchased land for Juneteenth celebrations, such as Emancipation Park in Houston, Texas. As families emigrated from Texas to other parts of the United States, they carried Juneteenth celebrations with them.

On January 1, 1980, Juneteenth officially became a Texas state holiday. Al Edwards, a freshman state representative, put forward the bill, H.B. 1016, making Texas the first state to grant this emancipation celebration. Since then, the federal government, all 50 states, and the District of Columbia have also commemorated or recognized the day.

Legislation

The first known official movement to make Juneteenth a federal holiday began in 1994,¹ and the first congressional resolution recognizing Juneteenth Independence Day was introduced in the

¹ National Juneteenth Observance Foundation, *History of the Modern Juneteenth Movement*, <http://pajuneteenth.org/national-juneteenth-observance-foundation-njof/>.

105th Congress in 1997.² The Senate and House of Representatives have since introduced these resolutions recognizing Juneteenth annually.

Recent Senate resolutions:

S.Res. 269 (117th Congress)

S.Res. 253 (116th Congress)

S.Res. 547 (115th Congress)

S.Res. 214 (115th Congress)

S.Res. 500 (114th Congress)

Recent House of Representatives resolutions:

H.Res. 480 (117th Congress)

H.Res. 450 (116th Congress)

H.Res. 948 (115th Congress)

H.Res. 386 (115th Congress)

H.Res. 787 (114th Congress)

Federal Holiday Legislation

116th Congress

H.Res. 1001 to recognize June 19 as Juneteenth Independence Day, was introduced on June 15, 2020.³ The resolution garnered 214 co-sponsors, and it led to the introduction of the first Juneteenth National Independence Day Act (H.R. 7232) on June 18, 2020. A subsequent Senate bill (S. 4019) was introduced on June 22, 2020. Neither bill was considered for a vote.

117th Congress

On February 25, 2021, H.R. 1320 and S. 475 were both introduced to establish Juneteenth as a federal holiday. S. 475 passed the Senate by unanimous consent on June 15, 2021, and it passed the House by a vote of 415-14 on June 16, 2021. The bill was signed into law on June 17, 2021,⁴ and Juneteenth became the 12th federal holiday. Juneteenth National Independence Day is the first holiday to be added to the list of federal holidays since the recognition of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday in 1983.

State Legislation

In addition to the federal government recognizing Juneteenth as a federal holiday, all states and the District of Columbia have passed legislation recognizing it as a holiday or observance. These states are listed in **Table 1**. At least 22 states along with the District of Columbia have designated

² S.J.Res. 11.

³ House Rule XII, Clause 5 prohibits date-specific commemorative legislation, and the passage of H.Res. 1001 required waiving House Rule XII by unanimous consent.

⁴ P.L. 117-17, June 17, 2021; 5 U.S.C. §6103(a). See **Table 2**.

Juneteenth as a permanent paid and/or legal holiday through legislation or executive action. Some states have made Juneteenth a paid holiday through a state statute that observes federal holidays or other days designated by the President as state holidays or by specifically directing the governor to make an annual proclamation. These states appear in **Table 2**. Other states have issued annual proclamations, decrees, or commemorations that designate Juneteenth as a paid holiday for a specific year.⁵ These states are not included in **Table 2**.

Table 1. States That Commemorate or Observe Juneteenth

State	Year of First Observance	Citation
Alabama	2011	Al. SJR 157 (2011)
Alaska	2001	Alaska Stat. §44.12.090 (2001)
Arizona	2016	Ariz. Rev. Stat. §1-315 (2016)
Arkansas	2005	Ark. Code Ann. §1-5-114 (2005)
California	2003	Cal. Gov't Code §6719 (Deering 2003)
Colorado	2004	H.J. Res. 04-1027, 64th Gen. Assemb., 2nd Reg. Sess. (Co. 2004)
Connecticut	2003	Conn. Gen. Stat. §10-29a(a)(48) (2003)
Delaware	2000	Del. Code Ann. tit. 1, §604 (2000)
District of Columbia	2003	Res. 160, 15 th Counsel, 2003 D.C.
Florida	1991	Fla. Stat. §683.21 (1991)
Georgia	2011	S. Res. 164, 151 st Gen. Assemb., Reg. Sess (Ga. 1991)
Hawaii	2021	Haw. Rev. Stat. Ann. §8-32
Idaho	2001	S. Con. Res. 101, 56th Leg., Reg. Sess. (Idaho 2001)
Illinois	2003	5 Ill. Comp. Stat. 490/63 (2003)
Indiana	2010	H. Con. Res. 38, 116 th Gen. Assemb., 2d Reg. Sess. (Ind. 2010)
Iowa	2002	Iowa Code §1C.14 (2002)
Kansas	2007	S. Res. 1860, 82 nd Leg., Reg. Sess. (Kan. 2007)
Kentucky	2005	Ky. Rev. Stat. §2.147 (2005)
Louisiana	2003	La. Stat. Ann. §1:58:2 (2003)
Maine	2011	Me. Stat. tit. 1, §150-H (2011)
Maryland	2014	Md. Code Ann., Gen. Prov. §7-411 (2014)
Massachusetts	2007	Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 6, §15BBBBB (2007)
Michigan	2005	Mich. Comp. Laws §435.361 (2005)
Minnesota	1996	Minn. Stat. §10.55 (1996)
Mississippi	2010	S.Con.Res. 605, 2010 Leg., Reg. Sess. (Miss. 2010)

⁵ For example, see State of Alabama 2022 Official State Holidays noting the holiday upon designation by the governor and Ala. Code §1-3-8 listing the state's holidays; Michigan governor proclamation specific to June 19, 2022, and Mich. Comp. Laws Serv. §435.101 listing state holidays; New Mexico State Personnel Board memorandum on state holidays and N.M. Stat. Ann. §12-5-2 listing public holidays for the state; and West Virginia governor proclamation specific to June 17, 2002, and W. Va. Stat. Ann. §2-2-1 listing legal holidays for the state.

State	Year of First Observance	Citation
Missouri	2003	Mo. Rev. Stat. §9.161 (2003)
Montana	2017	Mont. Code Ann. §1-1-231 (2017)
Nebraska	2009	Leg. Res. 75, 101st Leg., Reg. Sess. (Neb. 2009)
Nevada	2011	Nev. Rev. Stat. §236.033 (2011)
New Hampshire	2019	N.H. Rev. Stat. Ann. §14:13-z (2019)
New Jersey	2004	N.J. Rev. Stat. §36:2-80 (2004)
New Mexico	2006	N.M. Stat. Ann. §12-5-14 (2006)
New York	2004	N.Y. Exec. Law §168-a(3) (2004)
North Carolina	2007	2007 N.C. Sess. Laws 450
North Dakota	2021	S.B. 2232, 67th Leg. Assemb., Reg. Sess. (N.D. 2021)
Ohio ^a	2006	Ohio Rev. Code Ann. §5.2234 (2006)
Oklahoma	1994	Okla. Stat. tit. 25, §82.4 (1994)
Oregon	2001	S.J. Res. 31, 71st Leg. Assemb. (Or. 2001)
Pennsylvania	2019	2019 Pa. ALS 9
Rhode Island	2012	S.B. 2262, 2011-2012 Leg. Sess. (R.I. 2012)
South Carolina	2008	S.C. Code Ann. §53-3-85 (2008)
South Dakota	2022	S.D. Codified Law §1-5-1 (2022)
Tennessee	2007	2007 Bill Text TN H.J.R. 170
Texas	1980	Tex. Gov't Code Ann. §662.003 (1980)
Utah	2016	Utah Code Ann. §63G-1-401(1)(g) (2016)
Vermont	2007	Vt. Stat. Ann. tit. 1, §375 (2007)
Virginia	2007	H. Res. 56, 2007 Sess. (Va. 2007)
Washington	2007	Wash. Rev. Code §1.16.050(1)(f) (2007)
West Virginia	2008	H. Res. 19, 78th Leg., 2d Sess. (W. Va. 2008)
Wisconsin	2009	Wis. Stat. §995.20 (2009)
Wyoming	2003	Wyo. Stat. Ann. §8-4-107 (2003)

Source: Table compiled by the Congressional Research Service (CRS).

Notes: This table includes the first instance of a state's recognition of Juneteenth or the first legislation that established Juneteenth as a state holiday. It excludes legislation adopted by states after the initial observation year. For example, Kansas adopted multiple resolutions, such as S.Res. 1866 (2007), S.Res. 1888 (2009), S.Res. 1865 (2011), and S.Res. 1754 (2015), subsequent to the original commemoration.

Bolded legislation citations denote that the legislation established Juneteenth as a state holiday. This includes days of observance and does not necessarily mean that they are legal holidays. Nonbolded legislation citations are commemorations or recognitions of the day's significance.

- a. Ohio enacted a bill in 2006 to recognize September 22 as a state holiday called Emancipation Day. In 2021, Ohio Rev. Code Ann. §5.2447 became effective, designating June 19 as Juneteenth and making it a legal holiday.

Table 2. States Where Juneteenth Is Observed as a Permanent Paid State and/or Legal Holiday

State	Year Enacted	Citation
California	2022	Cal. Gov. Code §6700 (2022) eff. Sept. 29, 2022
Colorado	2022	Colo. Rev. Stat. §24-11-101 (2022)
Connecticut	2022	Conn. Gen. Stat. §1-4a (2022) eff. Oct. 1, 2022
Delaware	2021	Del. Code Ann. tit. 1, §501 (2022)
District of Columbia ^a	2021	D.C. Code §1-612.02(a) (2022)
Georgia ^b	2022	Ga. Code Ann. §1-4-1 (2022)
Idaho ^b	2021	Idaho Code §73-108 (2022)
Illinois	2021	5 Ill. Comp. Stat. 490/63 (2022)
Louisiana	2021	La. Rev. Stat. Ann. §1:55.1 (2022)
Maine	2022	Me. Rev. Stat. tit. 5, §59 (2022)
Maryland	2022	Md. Ann. Code Art. GP, §1-111 (2022)
Massachusetts ^c	2021	Mass. Ann. Laws ch. 6, §15BBBBB (2022)
Minnesota	2023	Minn. Stat. §10.55 (2023)
Missouri ^{b,d}	2013	Mo. Rev. Stat. §9.015 (2013)
Nebraska	2022	Neb. Rev. Stat. Ann. §62-301 (2022)
New Jersey	2021	N.J. Stat. §11A:6-24.1 (2022)
New York	2021	N.Y. Gen. Constr. Law § 24 (Consol. 2022)
Ohio	2021	Ohio Rev. Code Ann. §1.14 (2022)
Oregon	2021	Or. Rev. Stat. Ann. §187.010 (2021) eff. June 28, 2021
South Dakota	2022	S.D. Codified Laws §1-5-1 (2022) eff. July 1, 2022
Tennessee	2023	Tenn. Stat. Ann. §15-1-101 eff. May 5, 2023
Texas	1980	Tex. Gov't Code §662.003 (2022)
Utah	2022	Utah Code Ann. §63G-1-301 (2022)
Virginia	2020	Va. Code Ann. §2.2-3300 (2022)
Washington	2022	Wash. Rev. Code Ann. §1.16.050 (2022)

Source: Table compiled by the Congressional Research Service (CRS).

Notes: This list represents states where Juneteenth has been designated as a permanent paid state and/or legal holiday by state legislation or executive action. It does not include paid state holidays issued annually by proclamations, decrees, or commemorations. New Mexico is not included in this list. Although New Mexico's state personnel board unanimously voted to add Juneteenth to the list of 2022 paid state holidays (NM SPO General Memorandum 2021-004), Juneteenth is not a legal holiday in New Mexico (N.M. Stat. Ann. §12-5-2).

- See the Technical Amendments Act of 2022, where Juneteenth National Independence Day has been added to the list of legal holidays.
- Juneteenth was first observed as a paid state holiday through a state statute that recognizes federal holidays or other days designated by the President.
- The Massachusetts statute states, "The governor shall annually issue a proclamation setting apart the nineteenth of June as Juneteenth Independence Day...."
- The Missouri legislature also passed a bill (H.B. 1738, 101st Gen. Assemb, 2nd Reg. Sess.) that made Juneteenth the 13th legal holiday in the state. Mo. Rev. Stat. §9.010 went into effect on August 28, 2022.

Sample Congressional Speeches and Recognitions

Members of Congress often make floor statements, issue press releases, or enter Extensions of Remarks into the *Congressional Record* to recognize federal holidays and observances. The following are some recent examples that may be of assistance in preparing such statements:

Representative Barry Loudermilk, “Honoring Juneteenth as a National Holiday,” Extensions of Remarks, *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 168 (June 14, 2022), p. E617.

Representative Ayanna Pressley, “Celebrating Juneteenth,” *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 168 (June 15, 2022), p. H5593.

Representative Sheila Jackson Lee, “Celebrating Juneteenth,” remarks in the House, *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 167 (June 14, 2021), pp. H2728-H2736.

Representative Sheila Jackson Lee, “The 2020 Observance of the Historical Significance of Juneteenth Independence Day,” Extension of Remarks, *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 166 (June 30, 2020), pp. E590-E591.

Senator Benjamin L. Cardin, “Juneteenth,” remarks in the Senate, *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 166 (June 18, 2020), pp. S3098-S3099.

Representative Antonio Delgado, “Recognizing Juneteenth,” Extensions of Remarks, *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 165 (June 19, 2019), p. E769.

Senators Bill Nelson and Cory Booker, “Juneteenth Independence Day,” remarks in the Senate, *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 164 (June 19, 2018), pp. S4032-S4033.

Representative Sheila Jackson Lee, “Commemorating Juneteenth,” remarks in the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 162 (June 19, 2018), pp. H5274-H5275.

Representative Brian Babin, “Celebrating Juneteenth 2017,” Extensions of Remarks, *Congressional Record*, daily edition vol. 163 (June 15, 2017), p. E828.

Senator Harry Reid, “Celebrating Juneteenth,” remarks in the Senate, *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 162 (June 16, 2016), p. S4258.

Presidential Proclamations and Remarks

One of the many uses of a presidential proclamation is to ceremoniously honor a group or call attention to certain issues or events. Some proclamations and remarks commemorating Juneteenth from the *Compilation of Presidential Documents* include the following:

Statements and Messages by the President—Joseph R. Biden Jr. (2021-)

Statements and Messages by the President—Donald J. Trump (2018- 2021)

Statements and Messages by the President—Barack H. Obama (2010-2017)

Statements and Messages by the President—George W. Bush (2002-2009)

Historical and Cultural Resources

Numerous resources provide information on the history and culture of the holiday, including the following:

National Museum of African American History & Culture, “The Historical Legacy of Juneteenth.” This blog post provides a brief history of Juneteenth.

Smithsonian, “Juneteenth: Our Other Independence Day.” This blog post includes pictures of Major General George Granger and the house from which he read General Order No 3.

Library of Congress, “The Birth of Juneteenth; Voices of the Enslaved.” This blog post includes links to several interviews with formerly enslaved people about their memories of gaining their freedom.

Library of Congress, “Voices Remembering Slavery: Freed People Tell Their Stories.” This collection houses oral histories of 23 formerly enslaved people recorded between 1932 and 1975.

Texas State Historical Association, “Juneteenth.” A longer narrative of the history of Juneteenth.

National Archives and Records Administration, “National Archives Safeguards Original ‘Juneteenth’ General Order.” A short blog post that includes an image of handwritten General Order No. 3.

National Archives and Records Administration, “The Emancipation Proclamation.” The original, handwritten document.

Washington Post, “What is Juneteenth? Emancipation history with photos.” An interactive news story highlighting the history of Juneteenth.

New York Times, “So You Want to Learn About Juneteenth?” A primer on celebrating Juneteenth.

New York Times, “Hot Links and Red Drinks: The Rich Food Tradition of Juneteenth.”

Related CRS Report

CRS Report R43539, *Commemorations in Congress: Options for Honoring Individuals, Groups, and Events*, coordinated by Jacob R. Straus

Author Information

Devon Galena
Reference and Digital Services Librarian

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This fact sheet was originally authored by Molly Higgins, former CRS Reference and Digital Services Librarian. This fact sheet was previously updated by Erin Smith, former CRS Reference and Instruction Librarian.

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