



**Congressional
Research Service**

Informing the legislative debate since 1914

Juneteenth: Fact Sheet

Updated July 1, 2022

Congressional Research Service

<https://crsreports.congress.gov>

R44865



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 21 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.

R44865

July 1, 2022

Erin M. Smith

Reference and Instruction
Librarian

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.

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.

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 1865 date is largely symbolic. 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 their 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 recent 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 21 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). **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 Recognition | Citation |
|----------------------|---------------------|---|
| Alabama | 2011 | 2011 Ala. Adv. Legis. Serv. 398 (LexisNexis) |
| Alaska | 2001 | Alaska Stat. §44.12.090 (2001) |
| Arizona | 2016 | Ariz. Rev. Stat. §1-315 (LexisNexis 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 (LexisNexis 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. §7-41 I (LexisNexis 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 Recognition | Citation |
|-----------------------|---------------------|--|
| Missouri ^a | 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 (LexisNexis 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) (LexisNexis 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 | 2006 | Ohio Rev. Code Ann. §5.2234 (LexisNexis 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. 2011) |
| 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 (LexisNexis 1980) |
| Utah | 2016 | Utah Code Ann. §63G-1-401(1)(g) (LexisNexis 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(7)(l) (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.

States without links do not have publicly available versions of the bill or resolution online. Copies can be found on Lexis+. Congressional clients also may request copies from CRS.

- a. See H.B. 1738, 101st Gen. Assemb., 2nd Reg. Sess. that establishes Juneteenth as a legal state holiday. The bill was delivered to the governor on May 18, 2022, and is expected to be signed August 2022.

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

| State | Year of First Observance | Citation |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Colorado | 2022 | Colo. Rev. Stat §24-11-101 (2022) |
| Connecticut | 2023 | Conn. Gen. Stat. §1-4a (2022) Effective October 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 (West 2022) |
| Massachusetts ^c | 2021 | Mass. Ann. Laws ch. 6, §15BBBBB (2022) |
| Missouri ^{b,d} | 2021 | Mo. Rev. Stat. § 9.015 (LexisNexis 2021) |
| 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 (LexisNexis 2022) |
| Oregon | 2022 | Or. Rev. Stat. Ann. §187.010 (2022) |
| South Dakota | 2022 | S.D. Codified Laws §1-5-1 (2022) Effective July 1, 2022 |
| Texas | 1980 | Tex. Gov't Code §662.003 (LexisNexis 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, 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 is 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 has also passed a bill (H.B. 1738, 101st Gen. Assemb, 2nd Reg. Sess.) that will make Juneteenth the 13th legal holiday in the state. The bill was delivered to the governor on May 18, 2022, and is expected to be signed August 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 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.

Representative Jeb Hensarling, “Hensarling Commemorates Juneteenth,” press release, June 19, 2015.

Representative Julia Brownley, “Recognizing Ventura County’s 24th Annual Juneteenth Celebration,” Extensions of Remarks, *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 160 (June 19, 2014), p. E1023.

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 former enslaved 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 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.” 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

Erin M. Smith
Reference and Instruction Librarian

Acknowledgments

This fact sheet was originally authored by Molly Higgins, former Reference and Data Services Librarian.

Disclaimer

This document was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). CRS serves as nonpartisan shared staff to congressional committees and Members of Congress. It operates solely at the behest of and under the direction of Congress. Information in a CRS Report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to Members of Congress in connection with CRS's institutional role. CRS Reports, as a work of the United States Government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS Report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS Report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain the permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.