

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 923 Session of
2015

INTRODUCED BY KINSEY, JUNE 9, 2016

INTRODUCED AS NONCONTROVERSIAL RESOLUTION UNDER RULE 35,
JUNE 9, 2016

A RESOLUTION

1 Observing June 19, 2016, as "Juneteenth Independence Day" in
2 Pennsylvania in recognition of June 19, 1865, the date on
3 which slavery was abolished finally in all regions of the
4 United States.

5 WHEREAS, For 151 years, Americans of African descent have
6 celebrated June 19th as "Juneteenth Independence Day" or
7 "Juneteenth National Freedom Day" in recognition of the human
8 struggles of their enslaved descendants; and

9 WHEREAS, According to the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade
10 Database, between 1525 and 1866, the duration of the
11 transatlantic slave trade to the Americas, an estimated 12.5
12 million men, women and children were captured and forcibly
13 transported in bondage from their African homelands to the
14 Americas; and

15 WHEREAS, An estimated 10.7 Africans, mostly from the Congo,
16 Nigeria, Angola and Senegambia, survived the hazardous Middle
17 Passage and disembarked in North America, the Caribbean and
18 South America; and

19 WHEREAS, The forced migration of Africans to the United

States involved an estimated 472,000 men, women and children,
nearly 83,000 of whom did not survive the Middle Passage; and

WHEREAS, History characterizes the transatlantic slave trade
as a brutal and horrific commercial and economic enterprise and
the enslavement of Africans as cruel, exploitative and
dehumanizing; and

WHEREAS, Lasting for nearly four centuries, the transatlantic
slave trade represents one of the longest and most sustained
assaults on the life, integrity and dignity of human beings in
history and one of the greatest tragedies in the history of
humanity; and

WHEREAS, With the enactment of The Act Prohibiting
Importation of Slaves of 1807, the United States outlawed the
transatlantic slave trade in 1808; and

WHEREAS, Although the 1807 Federal legislation ended the
legality of the transatlantic slave trade in the United States,
the law was not universally enforced; and

WHEREAS, Enslaved Africans continued to be smuggled into the
United States, and the domestic slave trade was not affected;
and

WHEREAS, On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued
the Emancipation Proclamation, which proclaimed all enslaved
Africans to be free; and

WHEREAS, News of the Emancipation Proclamation did not reach
the frontier, in particular the State of Texas and the other
Southwestern States, until Union troops, commanded by Major
General Gordon Granger, arrived in Galveston, Texas, on June 19,
1885; and

WHEREAS, On that day in Galveston, more than two years after
President Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation, Major

1 General Granger announced the end of the Civil War and issued
2 General Order No. 3, which proclaimed all slaves to be free,
3 including absolute equality in personal rights; and

4 WHEREAS, Slavery, as an institution, was not officially
5 abolished until the ratification of the 13th Amendment to the
6 Constitution of the United States on December 6, 1865; and

7 WHEREAS, In 1997, the 105th Congress of the United States
8 passed House Joint Resolution 56 and Senate Joint Resolution 11
9 to officially recognize Juneteenth as the Independence Day
10 Observance of Americans of African descent; and

11 WHEREAS, People nationwide join together to celebrate June 19
12 as "Juneteenth Independence Day" in recognition of the end of
13 slavery in all regions of the United States and to commemorate
14 the survival and determination of African men, women and
15 children who survived the month-long journeys across the
16 Atlantic Ocean (the Middle Passage) and debarked to a life as
17 slave; and

18 WHEREAS, The faith, courage and strength of character
19 demonstrated by former slaves and the descendants of former
20 slaves remain an example for all people of the United States;
21 and

22 WHEREAS, The United States is the worldwide symbol of
23 democracy and freedom; therefore be it

24 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives:

25 (1) observe June 19, 2016, as "Juneteenth Independence
26 Day" in Pennsylvania in honor of the memory, resilience,
27 courage and determination of enslaved persons and of all
28 Americans, living and dead, who embody Dr. King's quote:
29 "None are free until all are free";

30 (2) recognize that the abolition of slavery is part of

1 the history and heritage of this Commonwealth; and

2 (3) encourage and support the continued celebration and
3 observance of "Juneteenth Independence Day" with appropriate
4 ceremonies, activities and programs in order to provide an
5 opportunity for the people of this Commonwealth to learn
6 about the past and better understand the institutions and
7 experiences that shaped our nation.