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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE BILL

No. 664 Session of  
2015

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INTRODUCED BY HELM, WATERS, KINSEY, MUSTIO, COHEN, LONGIETTI,  
KIM, READSHAW, REGAN, SCHREIBER, GRELL, BISHOP, THOMAS,  
PICKETT, MILLARD, DIGIROLAMO, HENNESSEY, V. BROWN, WHEELAND,  
O'NEILL, SCHWEYER, ROZZI, SONNEY, TOEPEL, YOUNGBLOOD,  
FREEMAN, STURLA, BROWNLEE, BOBACK, GINGRICH, DIAMOND, FARINA,  
DONATUCCI, ROSS, DeLUCA, CUTLER, KAUFFMAN, KIRKLAND, MARSICO,  
DUSH, RAPP, C. PARKER, McNEILL, MENTZER, WATSON, R. BROWN,  
MAJOR, MURT, MAHONEY, GROVE, WHEATLEY, KORTZ, HAHN, REED,  
ROEBUCK, BAKER, SAYLOR, CORBIN, PHILLIPS-HILL, KAMPF,  
McCARTER, TOOHIL, QUINN, MOUL, FABRIZIO AND GIBBONS,  
FEBRUARY 27, 2015

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON URBAN AFFAIRS, FEBRUARY 27, 2015

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AN ACT

1 Providing for the annual designation and holiday observance of  
2 the third Saturday in June as "Juneteenth National Freedom  
3 Day" in this Commonwealth.

4 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
5 hereby enacts as follows:

6 Section 1. Legislative findings.

7 The General Assembly hereby finds and declares as follows:

8 (1) Originating in Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865,  
9 when slaves in that state learned that they had been freed,  
10 "Juneteenth National Freedom Day" is the oldest African-  
11 American holiday observance in the United States.

12 (2) "Juneteenth National Freedom Day" commemorates the  
13 survival instinct of Africans who endured a transatlantic  
14 journey, known as the Middle Passage, on slave ships from

1 their homeland to this country.

2 (3) Approximately 11.5 million Africans survived the  
3 harsh voyage to slave markets in the New World, and the slave  
4 population in America grew quickly.

5 (4) "Juneteenth National Freedom Day" further  
6 commemorates the impact of slavery, the abolition movement  
7 and African-American emancipation in the United States and  
8 has become a traditional celebration of independence, human  
9 rights and African-American culture in many communities.

10 (5) Recognition of "Juneteenth National Freedom Day" in  
11 this Commonwealth would encourage all governmental entities,  
12 civic organizations, schools and institutions of higher  
13 education in this Commonwealth to observe the day in a manner  
14 that emphasizes the meaning and importance of the end of  
15 slavery in the United States and to recognize and celebrate  
16 the importance of this day to every person who cherishes  
17 liberty and equality for all people.

18 (6) "Juneteenth National Freedom Day" is celebrated  
19 annually in at least 37 states nationwide.

20 Section 2. Designation.

21 The third Saturday in June is designated as "Juneteenth  
22 National Freedom Day" in this Commonwealth.

23 Section 3. Effective date.

24 This act shall take effect immediately.