

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 375 Session of
2017

INTRODUCED BY KINSEY, V. BROWN, ROZZI, DEAN, BIZZARRO,
DONATUCCI, SIMS, LEWIS, RABB, GAINNEY, J. HARRIS, SCHLOSSBERG,
WARREN, PASHINSKI, O'NEILL, LONGIETTI, SCHWEYER, READSHAW,
WHEATLEY, CALTAGIRONE, GOODMAN, MILLARD, STURLA, FRANKEL,
IRVIN, DIGIROLAMO, FREEMAN, GROVE, D. COSTA AND NEILSON,
JUNE 5, 2017

INTRODUCED AS NONCONTROVERSIAL RESOLUTION UNDER RULE 35,
JUNE 5, 2017

A RESOLUTION

1 Observing June 19, 2017, 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 152 years, Americans of African descent have
6 celebrated June 19 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 million Africans, mostly from the
16 Congo, Nigeria, Angola and Senegambia, survived the hazardous

1 Middle Passage and disembarked in North America, the Caribbean
2 and South America; and

3 WHEREAS, The forced migration of Africans to the United
4 States involved an estimated 472,000 men, women and children,
5 nearly 83,000 of whom did not survive the Middle Passage; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

27 WHEREAS, News of the Emancipation Proclamation did not reach
28 the frontier, in particular the State of Texas and the other
29 southwestern states, until Union troops, commanded by Major
30 General Gordon Granger, arrived in Galveston, Texas, on June 19,

1 1885; and

2 WHEREAS, On that day in Galveston, more than two years after
3 President Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation, Major
4 General Granger announced the end of the Civil War and issued
5 General Order No. 3, which proclaimed all slaves to be free,
6 including absolute equality in personal rights; and

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

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

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

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

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

26 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives:

27 (1) observe June 19, 2017, as "Juneteenth Independence
28 Day" in Pennsylvania in honor of the memory, resilience,
29 courage and determination of enslaved persons and of all
30 Americans, living and dead, who embody Dr. King's quote:

1 "None are free until all are free";

2 (2) recognize that the abolition of slavery is part of
3 the history and heritage of this Commonwealth; and

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