
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 619 Session of
2019

INTRODUCED BY HELM, BERNSTINE, BIZZARRO, BOBACK, BROWN, BURNS,
CALTAGIRONE, DAVIDSON, DIGIROLAMO, FREEMAN, HENNESSEY, HILL-
EVANS, KINSEY, KORTZ, KULIK, LONGIETTI, MEHAFFIE, MILLARD,
NEILSON, OBERLANDER, RABB, READSHAW, ROTHMAN, RYAN, SAYLOR,
SCHLOSSBERG, SCHWEYER, SONNEY AND WHEELAND, FEBRUARY 28, 2019

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, FEBRUARY 28, 2019

AN ACT

1 Providing for the annual designation and holiday observance June
2 19 as "Juneteenth National Freedom Day" in this Commonwealth.

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

5 Section 1. Legislative findings.

6 The General Assembly hereby finds and declares as follows:

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

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

15 (3) Approximately 11.5 million Africans survived the
16 harsh voyage to slave markets in the New World, and the slave

1 population in America grew quickly.

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

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

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

17 Section 2. Designation.

18 June 19 is designated as "Juneteenth National Freedom Day" in
19 this Commonwealth.

20 Section 3. Construction.

21 Nothing in this act shall be construed as requiring an
22 employer to treat June 19 as a legal or official holiday or to
23 provide paid leave to an employee on June 19 solely by virtue of
24 the date being designated under this act.

25 Section 4. Effective date.

26 This act shall take effect immediately.