



Legislation Text

File #: 83860, **Version:** 1

Fiscal Note

No fiscal impact.

Title

Recognizing and commemorating June 19, 2024, as Juneteenth and Freedom Day in Madison, Wisconsin

Body

WHEREAS, June 19, 2024, marks the 159th commemoration of Juneteenth; and,

WHEREAS, June 19 or Juneteenth, is Freedom Day; and,

WHEREAS, this day not only celebrates freedom but honors and punctuates the quest for the civil liberty of freedom; and,

WHEREAS, Juneteenth, at its genesis, symbolically commemorates the end of slavery in America, and the beginning of the road to freedom for Black people, which is foundational to freedom for all; and,

WHEREAS, a contradiction existed between the American ideals of liberty and equality; and,

WHEREAS, in 1865, after the Civil War, the institution of slavery remained in effect with many citizens choosing to ignore the Emancipation Proclamation, an executive order for freedom and justice, signed into law nearly two and a half years prior to June 19, 1865; and,

WHEREAS, the plantation owners, business owners who owned enslaved people forced by birth and/or captivity as unpaid labors and involuntary servants in involuntary slavery from birth to death for generations, worked to further suppress the Proclamation; and,

WHEREAS, on June 19, 1865, under the direction of the United States Government, led by General Gordon Granger, the United States Colored Troops (numbers 29 and 31), and a cavalry of 1,800 plus troops arrived in Galveston, Texas, the last city in the United States to receive formal news; and,

WHEREAS, the troops, who were charged with enforcement of the Emancipation Proclamation, advised the community as a whole that all are free and that they had been freed by the Proclamation two and a half years prior and that, under the ratification of the 13th Amendment, slavery and involuntary servitude was unconstitutional and was banned in all United States territories; and,

WHEREAS, Juneteenth symbolizes a path towards a number of freedoms, such as the freedom to vote, freedom of religion, freedom to travel, freedom to dress yourself and be yourself, freedom to do business and be in business, freedom to be a litigant, freedom to get an education, freedom to grow your own food, freedom to marry who you want, freedom to earn a living, freedom to seek and receive healthcare, and much more; and,

WHEREAS, some of these freedoms are still being fought for to this day; and,

WHEREAS, the freedom to vote is of particular importance in 2024, as it is an election year; and,

WHEREAS, despite the freedom to vote being granted by the Emancipation Proclamation, Black people have confronted a series of discriminatory practices such as literacy tests, poll taxes, intimidation, and violent acts aimed at suppressing political participation since then; and,

WHEREAS, in response to this suppression, Black communities have organized voter registration drives, advocated for equal access to the ballot box, and demanded their constitutional rights, leading to the landmark legislation that was the Voting Rights Act of 1965; and,

WHEREAS, leaders such as Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Bayard Rustin, Fannie Lou Hamer, Mary Church Terrell, Ella Baker, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Bob Moses, Mary McLeod Bethune, and a force of others have played an integral role throughout history in demanding the right to the ballot box; and,

WHEREAS, over the past decades, throughout the Nation, the Black community has also worked in fellowship with other impacted communities and equal access stakeholders to protect the right and the freedom to vote, which is foundational to our democracy; and,

WHEREAS, this year, elections and the freedom to vote will be aided by the many volunteer poll workers, city clerks, and the various organizations that work to encourage people to vote; and,

WHEREAS, despite these efforts, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 has been repeatedly weakened by the United States Supreme Court, beginning with the *Shelby County v. Holder* decision in 2013 which rendered Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act inoperative, allowing states and localities to enact voting laws without federal oversight; and,

WHEREAS, this weakening of the Voting Rights Act has displayed the continued work we must do to uphold the freedom to vote, along with other freedoms that we celebrate each Juneteenth; and,

WHEREAS, Juneteenth observations and celebrations started in Texas in 1865; and,

WHEREAS, in 1990, a group of Madison's Black community leaders collaborated with the Madison Inner City Council on Substance Abuse to implement the Juneteenth Celebration, a family-centered, wholesome, drug- and alcohol-free event that children and families could enjoy with the mission to unite Madison's Black community in a positive way and improve its quality of life through the positive reinforcement of its heritage, culture, and accomplishments, as well as enhancing its ability to become an effective part of the greater Madison community; and,

WHEREAS, the State of Wisconsin first recognized Juneteenth as a State holiday in 2009; and,

WHEREAS, in 2021, the City of Madison added June 19 (Juneteenth Independence Day) to the list of City paid holidays in recognition of the date on which slavery effectively came to an end in the United States; and,

WHEREAS, Juneteenth became the official 11th United States Federal Holiday when President Biden signed the Juneteenth Independence Day Act into law on June 17, 2021; and,

WHEREAS, it is recognized that celebration of Juneteenth, the advocacy, and the historical context of the path to Juneteenth becoming the 11th national holiday, has roots connected directly to Madison and Milwaukee, Wisconsin;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Madison and the Madison Common Council recognize

that Juneteenth is Freedom Day as it stands as a marker of freedom for all in the United States and makes time for us to honor those who have worked in community, committing to engaging in actions and initiatives promoting freedom including the never-ending work of social justice, and the sanctity of every citizen's right to vote.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the official Juneteenth flag was raised on June 4, 2024, representing a new beginning; the colors red, white, and blue colors representing all Americans who cherish and stand for freedom; and promises that lay ahead when we stand for, fight for, recognize, honor the struggle it has taken to gain freedom for all and increase our will to protect it.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Madison Common Council and Mayor recognize and commemorate Juneteenth, June 19th, 2024, and further recognize the efforts put forth by those to bring awareness of this important day as we work toward a more just society and reflective past.