



Legislation Text

File #: 78151, **Version:** 2

Fiscal Note

No fiscal impact.

Title

SUBSTITUTE: Recognizing and commemorating June 19, 2023, as Juneteenth in Madison, Wisconsin

Body

WHEREAS, June 19, 2023, marks the 158th commemoration of Juneteenth; and,

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

WHEREAS, this day that 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 by 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; that (under the ratification of the 13th Amendment) slavery and involuntary servitude was unconstitutional and was banned in all US territories; and,

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

WHEREAS, Juneteenth became the official 11th United States Federal Holiday, when President Biden signed Juneteenth into law after the Juneteenth Independence Day Act Bill passed both houses of the United States Congress (2021); and,

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

WHEREAS, we applaud the dedication it took to made to make Juneteenth a national holiday and honor the effort delivered by Dr. Opal Lee, the Grandmother of Juneteenth, who at 89 after nearly 45 years of direct advocacy and 80 years of engaging communities (around Juneteenth and human rights issues), began a nationwide walk to raise awareness and later stood at the age of 95, holding hands with United States Vice President Harris, as they witnessed President Joseph Biden sign Juneteenth into law in a historical moment; and,

WHEREAS, we recognize that Lee, who was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts and who is first cousin to Madison's own Milele Chikasa Anana, found support and a cause to Walk in Wisconsin during her 1,400 mile walk to D.C. to deliver the more than three million signatures Lee collected as part of her collective journey to make Juneteenth a federal holiday; and,

WHEREAS, it is further recognized that Lee worked directly and in conjunction with Dr. Ronald Myers, "Doc Myers" a jazz-playing, Baptist preaching minister who was raised in Milwaukee and graduated from medical school at the University of Wisconsin Madison; and,

WHEREAS, Doc Myers also spent his life advocating for basic human rights and dedicated his time to helping launch the National Juneteenth Holiday Campaign; and,

WHEREAS, in conjunction with the National Juneteenth Observance Foundation passed Juneteenth bills in 46 out of 50 states, before it became a national holiday and before his untimely death in 2018; and,

WHEREAS, Madison's Juneteenth was first celebrated planned and celebrated community-wide in Madison in 1989, specifically led by Madison leaders Annie Weatherby Flowers and Mona Adams Winston who also worked with in conjunction with National Juneteenth Leadership and cherished the hometown connection; and,

WHEREAS, through self-determination and collective collaboration and responsibility, over the years, a group of local community leaders including Weatherby Flowers, Adams Winston, Diane Winfrey, Isadore and Cheryl Knox, Ed Holmes, Rick Flowers, John and Mona Winston, Fran Hill, Rose Johnson, UMOJA, Nehemiah Community Development Corporation, and others partnering with the Madison Inner City Council, finally formalized its efforts, in 2006, to create a yearly Juneteenth program through Kujichagulia: Madison Center for Self Determination;

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.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the official Juneteenth flag will be raised on June 6, 2023, 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, 2023, and further recognizes the efforts put forth by those to bring awareness of this important day as we work toward a more just society and reflective past.