

## ACT 53

S.B. NO. 939

A Bill for an Act Relating to Juneteenth Day.

*Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:*

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that Juneteenth, also known as Emancipation Day, Juneteenth Independence Day, and Black Independence Day, is a celebration of emancipation from slavery in the United States. June 19, 1865, marks the date that Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, and announced the end of the Civil War and the end of slavery.

The legislature further finds that although the Emancipation Proclamation came two and a half years earlier on January 1, 1863, many slave owners continued to hold their slaves captive after the announcement, so Juneteenth became a symbolic date representing African American freedom.

Texans celebrated Juneteenth beginning in 1866, and on January 1, 1980, Juneteenth officially became a Texas state holiday. The legislature finds that although Juneteenth is not a federal holiday, most states and the District of Columbia have passed legislation recognizing Juneteenth as a holiday or observance. Hawaii is one of three states that does not recognize Juneteenth as a state holiday or a special day of observance.

The purpose of this Act is to establish June 19 of each year as Juneteenth in recognition of the history and legacy of slavery in the United States and in

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honor of the significant roles and contributions of African Americans in the history of the United States.

SECTION 2. Chapter 8, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

**“§8- Juneteenth.** June 19 of each year shall be known and designated as Juneteenth to commemorate the end of slavery in the United States and in honor and recognition of the significant roles and contributions of African Americans in the history of the United States. Juneteenth is not and shall not be construed to be a state holiday.”

SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.<sup>1</sup>

SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

(Approved June 16, 2021.)

**Note**

1. Edited pursuant to HRS §23G-16.5.