

ENROLLED ORIGINAL

A CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION

24-167

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

April 5, 2022

To recognize the 160th anniversary of Emancipation Day in the District of Columbia on April 16th, 2022, to honor the history of this important day, and to reflect on the progress made and the progress still needed to achieve racial equity and justice for Black residents and residents of African descent.

WHEREAS, slavery existed in the District since before it was established as the nation's capital;

WHEREAS, the U.S. Capitol Building and the White House, were in large part constructed using slave labor;

WHEREAS, all enslaved people in the District were emancipated on April 16, 1862, when President Abraham Lincoln signed into law the District of Columbia Compensated Emancipation Act;

WHEREAS, the District of Columbia Compensated Emancipation Act abolished slavery in the District of Columbia freeing almost 3,000 enslaved persons 8 months before the Emancipation Proclamation was issued;

WHEREAS, the District of Columbia Compensated Emancipation Act is the only example of compensation by the federal government to former owners of emancipated slaves, and resulted in the payment of \$300 to former slave owners for each emancipated person formerly under their once lawful enslavement;

WHEREAS, \$300 in 1862 is over \$8,000 today;

WHEREAS, the District of Columbia Compensated Emancipation Act offered payments of up to \$100 to each formerly enslaved person who agreed to leave the United States;

WHEREAS, \$100 in 1862 is over \$2,000 today;

WHEREAS, very few, if any, residents of African descent accepted the \$100 to leave the United States;

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WHEREAS, in April 1866, formerly enslaved District residents began an annual tradition of celebrating the anniversary of their freedom with a parade on Pennsylvania Avenue;

WHEREAS, on March 8, 2000, the Council unanimously approved the District of Columbia Emancipation Day Emergency Amendment Act of 2000 to establish Emancipation Day as a holiday, and former Mayor Anthony A. Williams signed it into law on March 23, 2000;

WHEREAS, Mayor's Order 2004-35, established the Emancipation Commemoration Commission, a group of dedicated city leaders who develop plans, programs, projects, and activities to celebrate the holiday, to highlight the struggle to overcome slavery, and to profile the Black experience in the struggle for freedom, justice, and equality;

WHEREAS, in 2005, the District of Columbia Emancipation Day Amendment Act of 2004 further established Emancipation Day as a legal public holiday;

WHEREAS, effective March 17, 2005, the Emancipation Day Parade was formally established to annually celebrate and commemorate Emancipation Day;

WHEREAS, Emancipation Day in the District is a day of celebration of the freedom of men, women, and children who should never have been enslaved;

WHEREAS, Emancipation Day is a call to action for every single person in the District that we must work together to end structural and systemic racism in our government and society;

WHEREAS, along with celebration, Emancipation Day is a reminder that the abolition of slavery was only the first step of many in the fight for equal rights and protection for Black residents and residents of African descent, which continues to this day, over a century later; and,

WHEREAS, Emancipation Day will be observed this year on April 15th, 2022.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the "Emancipation Day Recognition Resolution of 2022".

Sec. 2. The Council of the District of Columbia celebrates the anniversary of the abolition of slavery in the District and recognizes the significance of the history of Emancipation Day and the reminder it provides of the continued need for progress.

Sec. 3. This resolution shall take effect immediately.