

House Bill 444

By: Representatives Paris of the 142nd, Mitchell of the 88th, Beverly of the 143rd, Holcomb of the 81st, Taylor of the 173rd, and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Code Section 1-4-1 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to public
2 and legal holidays and leave for observance of religious holidays not specifically provided
3 for, so as to designate June 19 of each year as a state holiday; to provide for legislative
4 findings; to revise the dates on which certain holidays may be observed in Georgia; to
5 provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

7 **SECTION 1.**

8 The General Assembly finds that:

- 9 (1) The Emancipation Proclamation was issued by President Abraham Lincoln on
10 January 1, 1863, and General Lee surrendered in April 1865, officially ending the United
11 States Civil War;
- 12 (2) News of the Emancipation Proclamation and the end of slavery did not reach Texas,
13 Oklahoma, Louisiana, Arkansas, and California until June 19, 1865;
- 14 (3) On that evening, thousands of former slaves flooded the streets in spontaneous
15 celebration, rejoicing in the news of their long awaited freedom;

16 (4) To commemorate the joyous events of June 19, 1865, June 19 has been observed as
 17 "Juneteenth";

18 (5) "Juneteenth" and similar Emancipation Day celebrations recognizing the abolition
 19 of slavery are officially observed in numerous states and Washington, D.C.;

20 (6) Americans of all colors, creeds, cultures, religions, and countries of origin share in
 21 a common love of and respect for freedom, as well as the determination to protect their
 22 right to freedom through the democratic institutions by which the tenets of freedom are
 23 guaranteed and protected; and

24 (7) It is only fitting and proper that the State of Georgia appropriately recognize as a
 25 state holiday this glorious event marking the end of slavery and the beginning of freedom
 26 for so many who had wrongfully suffered in this state and nation.

27 **SECTION 2.**

28 Code Section 1-4-1 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to public and legal
 29 holidays and leave for observance of religious holidays not specifically provided for, is
 30 amended by revising subsection (a) as follows:

31 "(a) The State of Georgia shall recognize and observe as public and legal holidays:

32 (1) All days which have been designated as of January 1, 1984, as public and legal
 33 holidays by the federal government; ~~and~~

34 (2) June 19 of each year, which shall be designated as "Juneteenth Independence Day";
 35 and

36 (3) All other days designated and proclaimed by the Governor as public and legal
 37 holidays or as days of fasting and prayer or other religious observance. In such
 38 designation, the Governor ~~shall~~ may include ~~at least~~ one of the following dates: January
 39 19, April 26, or June 3, or a suitable date in lieu thereof to commemorate the event or
 40 events now observed by such dates."

41

SECTION 3.

42 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.