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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2014

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SENATE RESOLUTION

RECOGNIZING "JUNETEENTH NATIONAL FREEDOM DAY" ON JUNE 19 OF EACH  
YEAR

Introduced By: Senator Harold M. Metts

Date Introduced: June 20, 2014

Referred To: Recommended for Immediate Consideration

1           WHEREAS, First observed one hundred and forty-nine years ago, Juneteenth National  
2 Freedom Day is the oldest and only African-American holiday observance in the United States;  
3 and

4           WHEREAS, Also known as Emancipation Day, Emancipation Celebration, Freedom  
5 Day, Jun-Jun, and Juneteenth, Juneteenth National Freedom Day commemorates the strong  
6 survival instinct of African-Americans who were first brought to this country stacked in the  
7 bottom of slave ships in a month-long journey across the Atlantic Ocean known as the Middle  
8 Passage; and

9           WHEREAS, Approximately eleven and one-half million African-Americans survived the  
10 voyage to the New World, with the number that died likely greater, and those who did survive  
11 were subjected to whipping, castration, branding, and rape, and were forced to submit to slavery  
12 for more than two hundred years after their arrival in the United States; and

13           WHEREAS, Events in the history of the United States that led to the Civil War of 1861  
14 centered around sectional differences between the North and South that were based on the  
15 economic and social divergence caused by the existence of slavery; and

16           WHEREAS, Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated as President of the United States in 1861,  
17 and as President, Lincoln believed and stated that the paramount object of the Civil War was to  
18 save the Union rather than to save or destroy slavery; and

19           WHEREAS, But Lincoln also stated his belief that all men everywhere should be free,

1 thus adding to the growing anticipation of slaves that their ultimate liberation was at hand; and

2 WHEREAS, In 1862, the first clear sign that the end of slavery was imminent came when  
3 laws abolishing slavery in the territories of Oklahoma, Nebraska, Colorado, and New Mexico  
4 were passed; and

5 WHEREAS, In September of that same year, President Lincoln warned the eleven  
6 rebellious Confederate States that if they did not return to the Union by January 1, 1863, he  
7 would declare their slaves forever free via the celebrated Emancipated Proclamation; and

8 WHEREAS, Enforcement of the Emancipation Proclamation, however, only occurred in  
9 Confederate States once they were under Union Army control and Congress subsequently passed  
10 the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution on January 31, 1865, abolishing slavery  
11 throughout the United States and its territories; and

12 WHEREAS, News of this action reached the states at different times, and it was not until  
13 June 19 of 1865, that the message of freedom reached the slaves in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana,  
14 Arkansas, and California; and

15 WHEREAS, Spontaneous celebrations erupted throughout the country when African-  
16 Americans learned of their freedom; and

17 WHEREAS, Juneteenth National Freedom Day celebrates the abolishment of slavery  
18 with excitement and great joy and is a reminder to all Americans of the status and importance that  
19 Americans of African descent hold as American citizens; now, therefore be it

20 RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
21 hereby urges the citizens of the State of Rhode Island to recognize the historical significance of  
22 Juneteenth Independence Day and to observe Juneteenth National Freedom Day on June 19<sup>th</sup>; and  
23 be it further

24 RESOLVED, That this Senate supports the annual celebration of Juneteenth National  
25 Freedom Day in order to provide an opportunity for the people of the state to learn more about  
26 our country's past and to better understand the experiences that have shaped our nation; and be it  
27 further

28 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and he hereby is authorized and directed to  
29 transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to the Governor of the State of Rhode Island and  
30 Reverend Ronald V. Myers, Sr., M.D.

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