

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1016

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government & Tribal Relations

Title: An act relating to making Juneteenth a legal holiday.

Brief Description: Making Juneteenth a legal holiday.

Sponsors: Representatives Morgan, Lovick, Ryu, Wicks, Ortiz-Self, Berry, Leavitt, Johnson, J., Kloba, Shewmake, Simmons, Bateman, Lekanoff, Duerr, Fitzgibbon, Chopp, Slatter, Ramos, Ramel, Peterson, Gregerson, Valdez, Callan, Young, Hackney, Cody, Ormsby, Riccelli, Rude, Stonier, Fey, Frame, Santos, Macri, Taylor, Davis, Pollet, Bergquist and Harris-Talley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government & Tribal Relations: 1/13/21, 1/20/21 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Designates June 19, commonly known as Juneteenth, as a state legal holiday.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL RELATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Valdez, Chair; Lekanoff, Vice Chair; Volz, Ranking Minority Member; Dolan and Gregerson.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Graham.

Staff: Jason Zolle (786-7124).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Juneteenth. On June 19, 1865, more than two years after the effective date of the Emancipation Proclamation, people in Galveston, Texas finally learned that the Civil War had ended and enslaved people had been freed. June 19 has subsequently been celebrated as Juneteenth or Emancipation Day to commemorate the abolishment of slavery and recognize the contributions of Black/African Americans to society. Forty-six states recognize Juneteenth as either a holiday or day of observance. In 2007 the Legislature designated Juneteenth a legislatively recognized day as a day of remembrance for when slaves learned of their freedom.

State Holidays. Washington recognizes 10 specific days as state legal holidays: New Year's Day; Martin Luther King, Jr. Day; President's Day; Memorial Day; Independence Day; Labor Day; Veterans' Day; Thanksgiving Day; Native American Heritage Day; and Christmas Day. Another 17 specific days are recognized by the Legislature, but they are not considered legal holidays. Some of those days commemorate specific events, such as Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day. Other days commemorate groups of people, such as Korean-American Day, or certain ideas, such as Human Trafficking Awareness Day and Public Lands Day.

Summary of Bill:

June 19, known as Juneteenth, is designated a state legal holiday.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Making Juneteenth a paid state holiday is a step toward racial reconciliation. It is not enough to just recognize and celebrate the day; making Juneteenth an official state holiday will bring awareness and consciousness to a crucial day in history. In spite of the Emancipation Proclamation, many people were not eager to get the message of abolition to all the slaves in confederate states. The images of the confederate flag being waved in the halls of the United States Capitol last week are a poignant reminder that the ideology of the confederacy has created the inequity that is still experienced today. This bill is necessary to further educate communities about the history of slavery and its devastating impacts. Cost to the state was a concern last session, and others are concerned that this bill does not actually address inequity in the state. True, making Juneteenth a paid holiday will not make

racial inequity go away and it will not end racism. But it will send a message that the State of Washington recognizes that slavery was an atrocity, and it ensures that we remember when Black slaves were released from bondage. This bill is therefore not about a holiday, but it is about taking a step toward healing and reconciliation. The social uprisings of the past year have demanded such action.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Morgan, prime sponsor; Representative Lovick; Kristen Gledhill, South Sound Antiracist Project; Marcus Glasper, Blacks United in Leadership and Diversity; Sam Cho, Port of Seattle; Jim Mendoza; Monica Wilson and Da'Mea Birdsong, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Valerie Hunt, Seattle Central College; Sandra Toussaint, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 28, Washington Federation of State Employees; Michelle Merriweather, Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle; Paul Benz, Faith Action Network; Paula Sardinias and Emily Pinckney, FMS Global Strategies/Washington Build Back Black Alliance; Chaune' Fitzgerald, Women of Wisdom Tri-Cities; Nasue Nishida, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; RaShelle Davis, Office of the Governor; and Jonathan Johnson.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.