



SPONSOR: Sen. Henry ;
Reps. Plant ,Keeley & Williams

DELAWARE STATE SENATE

140th GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SENATE BILL NO. 282

AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 1 OF THE DELAWARE CODE BY ESTABLISHING A JUNETEENTH NATIONAL FREEDOM DAY.

1 WHEREAS, more that 130 years old, Juneteenth National Freedom Day is the oldest and only
2 African-American holiday observance in the United States. Also known as "Emancipation Day,"
3 "Emancipation Celebration," "Freedom Day," "Jun-Jun" and "Juneteenth." Juneteenth National Freedom
4 Day commemorates the strong survival instinct of African-Americans who were first brought to this
5 country stacked in the bottom of slave ships in a month-long journey across the Atlantic Ocean known as
6 the "Middle Passage."; and

7 WHEREAS, approximately eleven and one-half million African-Americans survived the voyage
8 to the New World - the number that died is likely greater - only to be subjected to whipping, castration,
9 branding and rape, and forced to submit to slavery for more than 200 years after arrival in the United
10 States; and

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

14 WHEREAS, Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated as President of the United States in 1861. As
15 President, Lincoln believed and stated that the paramount object of the Civil War was to save the Union
16 rather than save or destroy slavery. Yet Lincoln has stated his wish that "all men everywhere could be
17 free," thus adding to a growing anticipation by slaves that their ultimate liberation was at hand; and

18 WHEREAS, in 1862, the first clear signs that the end of slavery was imminent came when laws
19 abolishing slavery in the territories of Oklahoma, Nebraska, Colorado and New Mexico were passed. In

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

23 WHEREAS, enforcement of the "Emancipation Proclamation," however, only occurred in
24 Confederate States under Union Army control. Congress subsequently passed the Thirteenth Amendment
25 to the Constitution on January 31, 1865, abolishing slavery throughout the United States and its
26 territories. News of this action reached the states at different times, and it was not until June 19, 1865, that
27 the message of freedom reached the slaves in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Arkansas and California; and

28 WHEREAS, spontaneous celebration erupted throughout the country when African-Americans
29 learned of their freedom. Juneteenth National Freedom Day demonstrates that slavery hated slavery and
30 celebrated its abolishment with excitement and great joy. It is a reminder to all Americans of the status
31 and importance of Americans of African descent as American citizens.

32 NOW THEREFORE:
33 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE:

34 Section 1. Amend Chapter 6, Title 1 of the Delaware Code by adding a new section to read as
35 follows:

36 "Section 604. Juneteenth National Freedom Day

37 The following day shall be commemorated in this State by appropriate ceremonies: The third
38 Saturday of June, known as Juneteenth National Freedom Day."

SYNOPSIS

This bill establishes the third Saturday of June as Juneteenth National Freedom Day in the State of Delaware.

Author: Sen. Henry