

CHAPTER 3

AN ACT designating the third Saturday in June of each year as "Juneteenth Independence Day" in New Jersey.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. The Legislature finds and declares that:
 - a. Juneteenth was first observed over 130 years ago, and is the oldest known celebration of the abolition of slavery in the United States;
 - b. Juneteenth commemorates June 19, 1865, the day General Gordon Granger rode into Galveston, Texas, with news that the Civil War had ended and the enslaved were free;
 - c. Word of freedom finally reached the slaves in Texas, two and a half years after the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, and so the majority of slaves in the South were made aware of their freedom and jubilant celebrations evolved into a general celebration of freedom;
 - d. The celebration of Juneteenth symbolizes freedom, celebrates the abolition of slavery, and reminds all Americans of the significant contributions African-Americans have made to our society;
 - e. Juneteenth serves as a reminder to all Americans of the triumph of the human spirit over the cruelty of slavery, honors those African-Americans who survived the inhumane institution of bondage, and demonstrates pride in their legacy of resistance and perseverance;
 - f. Juneteenth was first given official State recognition when, in 1980, Texas made it an official state holiday, and a campaign exists to establish Juneteenth as a national holiday;
 - g. In modern times, Juneteenth continues to enjoy growing interest, recognition, and celebration among organizations and communities throughout the country, with Juneteenth-centered activities having been sponsored by such institutions as the Smithsonian Museum and the Henry Ford Museum;
 - h. In New Jersey, Juneteenth is celebrated in communities such as East Orange, Camden, Jersey City, Paterson, Pennington, Trenton and Willingboro;
 - i. It is proper and fitting for the State of New Jersey to designate the third Saturday in June of each year as "Juneteenth Independence Day" in New Jersey to honor and celebrate the emancipation of our ancestors.

C.36:2-80 "Juneteenth Independence Day"; designated.

2. The third Saturday in June of each year is hereby designated as "Juneteenth Independence Day" in New Jersey to commemorate and celebrate the emancipation of African-Americans and foster respect for all cultures.

C.36:2-81 Annual observation, call by Governor.

3. The Governor shall annually issue a proclamation and call upon public officials, private organizations and all citizens of this State to observe this emancipation celebration each year with appropriate events and activities.

4. a. Each board of education may offer instruction on "Juneteenth Independence Day" at an appropriate place in the curriculum.

b. The Commissioner of Education shall develop and make available to each board of education curriculum guidelines for the teaching of "Juneteenth Independence Day" within the public school curriculum. The guidelines shall include, but not be limited to, instruction on the historical and cultural significance of Juneteenth.

5. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved April 4, 2004.