



City of Philadelphia

City Council
Chief Clerk's Office
402 City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107

BILL NO. 260568

Introduced May 28, 2026

Councilmember Bass

**Referred to the
Committee on Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs**

AN ORDINANCE

Designating the twenty-first day of May as the holiday "Ona Judge Day," all under certain terms and conditions.

WHEREAS, Ona Judge was one of nine enslaved African descendants held in bondage by George Washington during his presidency from 1790-1797 at the President's House located at 6th and Market Streets in Philadelphia, the site of America's first "White House"; and

WHEREAS, On May 21, 1796, Ona Judge courageously escaped from bondage, resisting the institution of slavery and asserting her right to freedom, ultimately fleeing to New Hampshire where, as a free woman, she outlived George and Martha Washington by more than 50 years; and

WHEREAS, Ona Judge's life represents a powerful act of resistance, self-determination, and courage, as she evaded repeated efforts to be recaptured and refused to return to enslavement despite pressure and pursuit; and

WHEREAS, Her story is a critical part of both Philadelphia's and the nation's history, illustrating the contradictions between the ideals of liberty and the realities of slavery in the founding of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Honoring May 21st of each year as "Ona Judge Day" in the City of Philadelphia and encourages residents, educators, institutions, and community organizations to commemorate this day through education, reflection, and programming that uplifts the history and legacy of Ona Judge and all those who resisted enslavement; now, therefore,

THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA HEREBY ORDAINS:

City of Philadelphia

BILL NO. 260568 continued

SECTION 1. From this day forward, the twenty-first day of May is hereby designated the holiday Ona Judge Day.

SECTION 2. This Ordinance shall take effect immediately.