



# City of Philadelphia

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

## Legislation Text

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Calling for the installation of a Philadelphia Historic Marker on the west end of Eakins Oval, near Ericsson Fountain on Spring Garden Street, to commemorate the 100th Philadelphia Thanksgiving Day Parade, the oldest known Thanksgiving Day Parade in the Nation, on November 28, 2019.

WHEREAS, Ellis Gimbel, Chairman of the Board for Gimbel Brothers Department Store created the first organized Thanksgiving Day Parade in the Nation on November 25, 1920; and

WHEREAS, The first five parades modestly included 15 cars lavishly decorated with crepe paper, fifty employees, and a City firefighter dressed as Santa; and

WHEREAS, In 1925, the parade, or procession, grew from its humble beginnings to a parade that featured sixty parade elements including bands of music, floats, live animals and the arrival of Santa Claus on a float pulled by live reindeer, forming an activity which was officially named as the Gimbel's Thanksgiving Day Parade; and

WHEREAS, The parade, from 1925 to 1985, traveled down the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, around City Hall and ended at the Gimbels Department store at 8th and Market Streets, where Santa would climb a Philadelphia Fire Department engine ladder into the window of the Gimbels Department store to officially kick off the holiday season; and

WHEREAS, The Santa Climb, like the parade itself, continued to grow establishing time-honored traditions with the addition of large parade balloons, large floats, celebrities, special parade units, high school and university marching bands from across the nation, up until 1985 when the Gimbel's Department store closed their doors for business, leaving this popular annual Philadelphia iconic event in peril; and

WHEREAS, In 1986, WPVI-TV (Channel 6) stepped up and, without skipping a parade step, resumed the long-standing parade by signing on as the official sponsor and producer, thus creating the Channel 6 Philadelphia Thanksgiving Day Parade, adding elaborate fancy floats, gigantic character helium balloons, marching bands, performing groups from around the globe under the leadership of professional parade producer Valerie Lagauskas; and

WHEREAS, The traditional parade route changed in 1986, establishing a new starting point at 20th and Market Streets, with the route continuing to 15th Street, and then to the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, and ending at the landmark Philadelphia Museum of Art; and

WHEREAS, Numerous departments in the City of Philadelphia, have worked collaboratively and closely with WPVI decades to ensure a quality production of the parade; and

WHEREAS, In 1996, the Walt Disney Company became the parent company of ABC and strengthened the partnership with the parade, that continues today, bringing Mickey Mouse and Minnie Mouse and countless other famous generational characters to entertain the audience; and

WHEREAS, In 1999, the parade was elevated to the next level, expanding the major street and television spectacular -- under the leadership of a new team of professional outside producers including Maria DiBenedetto, Todd Marcocci and John Best -- making for a television extravaganza that the City of Philadelphia, the Delaware Valley, and audiences around the Nation including Puerto Rico look forward to each Thanksgiving Day; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Museum of Art steps and surrounding streets have been home, since 1986, to some of the largest entertainment productions and performances in the United States, with the largest finale to the parade on record that ceremoniously included over 3000 performers; and,

WHEREAS, The parade over the last century has hosted hundreds of thousands of participants, performers and entertainers in a City that cherishes its parades; and

WHEREAS, Countless loyal and dedicated volunteers have played a significant part in the parade's success with their unparalleled energy to help carry on the vision of Ellis Gimbel over the 100 parades; and

WHEREAS, An estimated 100 million spectators have viewed the parade over the last 10 decades along the parade route; and

WHEREAS, This historical parade is viewed by families that have been attending the parade for numerous decades, thus creating many long-standing Thanksgiving memories and traditions for scores of adoring onlookers, some of whom still watch the parade from the exact location along the route to this day; and

WHEREAS, The Nation's first widely recognized organized Thanksgiving Day Parade in the nation, born here in the cradle of "the City of Firsts" Philadelphia on November 25, 1920 has survived the Great Depression, World War II, countless other historic moments, and the closure of the original store, which created and produced the parade, has brought endless joy, friendship, entertainment, and a magical sense of community to Philadelphia, and the Nation; and

WHEREAS, The parade is currently known as the 6 ABC/Dunkin Thanksgiving Day Parade; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That a Philadelphia historic marker be erected on the west end of Eakins Oval, near Ericsson Fountain on Spring Garden Street, to commemorate the 6 ABC/Dunkin Thanksgiving Day Parade, the oldest known Thanksgiving Day Parade in the Nation and be officially presented on November 7, 2019 during a special parade press conference, and formally dedicated on November 28, 2019 -- the date of the 100th Parade.