Legislation Text

File #: 210562, **Version:** 0

Recognizing Saturday, June 19, 2021, as Juneteenth Independence Day in the City of Philadelphia, in honor of June 19, 1865, the day when enslaved Black people were finally freed in the United States of America, declaring the annual Juneteenth Philly Festival and Johnson House Historic Site Festival as Philadelphia's official Juneteenth celebrations, and advocating for the City of Philadelphia to become the official home of the National Juneteenth Independence Day Celebration.

WHEREAS, The institution of American chattel slavery held more than 4,000,000 African people and their descendants in bondage from 1619 to 1865; and

WHEREAS, During that time, this inhumane practice formed the backbone of the American economy, while enslaved Black people were deprived of the fundamental American rights of life, liberty, and citizenship, and stripped of their cultural identities; and

WHEREAS, President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation took effect on January 1, 1863, declaring an end to the practice of chattel slavery in the United States of America that had held enslaved Black people in bondage since 1619; and

WHEREAS, Enslaved people in Galveston, Texas were not informed that they were free until more than two years after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, when Union soldiers delivered the news on June 19, 1865; and

WHEREAS, Formerly enslaved Black people and their descendants have continued to celebrate June 19th as Juneteenth Independence Day for more than 150 years, as a day of celebration and recognition of the emancipation of all enslaved people in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth celebrations have long been a staple in Philadelphia's historically Black neighborhoods, with groups in West Philadelphia and Germantown hosting large celebrations and festivals for more than 15 years; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia celebrates a rich history in the struggle for freedom, with many residents having offered their homes, businesses, and places of worship as "stations" along the Underground Railroad and meeting spaces for Abolitionists; and

WHEREAS, Located at the corner of Germantown Avenue and Washington Lane in the Germantown neighborhood of Philadelphia, the Johnson House Historic Site has stood as one such "station," for more than 250 years, and is today a designated National Historic Landmark, museum, and center for civil and social advocacy; and

WHEREAS, This year, the Johnson House Historic Site will host its 15th annual Juneteenth celebration, featuring an afternoon of history, cultural expression, social justice, activities, and vendors; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth Philly is an organization that has brought Black Philadelphians together to have fun, celebrate their history, and continue the tradition of Kujichagulia (self-determination); and

WHEREAS, This year, Juneteenth Philly will host its fifth annual Philadelphia Juneteenth Parade and Festival, which this year includes a series of events celebrating Juneteenth Independence Day, featuring floats, vendors, a Freedom March, and the inaugural 'Art in the Park' Exhibit at Malcolm X Park; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia is recognized as the birthplace of American freedom, but that history is incomplete without the full and enthusiastic celebration of Juneteenth Independence Day, the day when *all* Americans could truly and finally call themselves free citizens of this nation; and

WHEREAS, Considering its rich history and its vibrant Black community, there is no better place than Philadelphia to be named the official home of a national annual Juneteenth celebration. Like the Fourth of July, Juneteenth should be celebrated across the country, honoring the freedom of once-enslaved Black Americans, and serving as an opportunity for reflection on the liberties and rights we all hold dear; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby recognizes June 19, 2021, as Juneteenth Independence Day in the City of Philadelphia, declares the Juneteenth Philly Festival and Johnson House Historic Site Festival as Philadelphia's official Juneteenth celebrations, and calls for Philadelphia to become the home of the National Juneteenth Independence Day Celebration.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to the leadership of Juneteenth Philly, and the board of the Johnson House Historic Site for their leadership in hosting annual Juneteenth Festivals, and as further evidence of this Council's sincere admiration of their efforts.

powered by Legistar™