



House Office Building, 9 South
Lansing, Michigan 48909
Phone: 517/373-6466

JUNETEENTH NATIONAL FREEDOM DAY

House Bill 4986

Sponsor: Rep. Artina Tinsley Hardman
Committee: House Oversight and
Operations

Complete to 7-19-01

A SUMMARY OF HOUSE BILL 4986 AS INTRODUCED 6-21-01

The bill would designate the third Saturday in June as “Juneteenth National Freedom Day”. The bill states that:

The legislature recognizes that slavery existed in this country for more than 200 years. Millions of African-Americans were brought to this country as slaves stacked in the bottom of slave ships in a 5- to 12-week journey across the Atlantic Ocean known as the “middle passage”. Although approximately 11½ million African-Americans survived the voyage across the ocean, the number of those who died is probably even higher. Once in this country, the captives were subjected to whipping, castration, branding, and rape.

The legislature further observes that Congress passed the thirteenth amendment to the United States Constitution on January 31, 1865, abolishing slavery throughout the United States and its territories. In the following months, spontaneous celebrations erupted throughout the country whenever African-Americans learned of their freedom. News of the amendment reached the states at different times, and it was not until June 19, 1865 that the message of freedom reached the slaves in the western states.

In honor of this moment in the history of the nation, the bill would designate the third Saturday in June as Juneteenth National Freedom Day, and specifies that the legislature encourages citizens and organizations to pause on this day to reflect upon the strong survival instinct of the African-American slaves and the excitement and great joy with which African-Americans first celebrated the abolition of slavery. The states that “it is a reminder to all Americans of the status and importance of Americans of African descent as American citizens.”

Analyst: D. Martens

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