

HOUSE BILL No. 4986

June 21, 2001, Introduced by Reps. Hardman, Kilpatrick, Lemmons, Murphy, Clark, McConico, Lipsey, Daniels, Jacobs, Kolb, Rivet, Neumann, Waters, Jamnick, Quarles, Hale, Gielegem, Reeves, Bernero, Thomas and Phillips and referred to the Committee on House Oversight and Operations.

A bill to designate the third Saturday in June as Juneteenth national freedom day.

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF MICHIGAN ENACT:

1 Sec. 1. (1) The legislature recognizes that slavery existed
2 in this country for more than 200 years. Millions of
3 African-Americans were brought to this country as slaves stacked
4 in the bottom of slave ships in a 5- to 12-week journey across
5 the Atlantic Ocean known as the "middle passage". Although
6 approximately 11-1/2 million African-Americans survived the
7 voyage across the ocean, the number of those who died in the
8 inhuman conditions of the passage is probably even higher. Once
9 in this country, the captives were subjected to whipping, castra-
10 tion, branding, and rape.

11 (2) The legislature further observes that congress passed
12 the thirteenth amendment to the United States constitution on

1 January 31, 1865, abolishing slavery throughout the United States
2 and its territories. In the following months, spontaneous cele-
3 brations erupted throughout the country whenever
4 African-Americans learned of their freedom. News of the amend-
5 ment reached the states at different times, and it was not until
6 June 19, 1865 that the message of freedom reached the slaves in
7 the western states. In honor of this great moment in the history
8 of our nation, the legislature declares that the third Saturday
9 in June of each year shall be known as Juneteenth national free-
10 dom day.

11 (3) The legislature encourages individuals, educational
12 institutions, and social, community, religious, labor, and busi-
13 ness organizations to pause on Juneteenth national freedom day
14 and reflect upon the strong survival instinct of the
15 African-American slaves and the excitement and great joy with
16 which African-Americans first celebrated the abolition of
17 slavery. It is a reminder to all Americans of the status and
18 importance of Americans of African descent as American citizens.