

CHAPTER 48**(HB 42)**

AN ACT relating to establishing Juneteenth National Freedom Day in Kentucky.

WHEREAS, most citizens believe that the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863 legally ended slavery; however, the proclamation only applied to states which seceded from the Union and did not apply to Kentucky; and

WHEREAS, by the time the Thirteenth Amendment was ratified in December, 1865, only nine states, Kentucky among them, still clung to the institution of slavery even though in 1833 Kentucky passed legislation prohibiting the importation of African slaves into the state for resale south; and

WHEREAS, some slaves in Kentucky won freedom by joining the army when President Lincoln declared that any slave joining the Union Army would be given freedom; and

WHEREAS, the Civil War ended in April, 1865, but bondage did not end for approximately 225,000 Kentucky slaves until the Thirteenth Amendment was ratified December 18, 1865; and

WHEREAS, each state has its own story as to when the slaves were notified of their freedom: July 4th in New York, September 22nd in Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio, and May 8th in Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth, or June 19, 1865, is considered the date when the last slaves in America were freed by General Gordon Granger, who arrived in Galveston, Texas and issued General Order Number Three, almost two and one-half years after President Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation; and

WHEREAS, Kentucky overwhelmingly rejected the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment but finally went on record against slavery in 1976; and

WHEREAS, President Harry S. Truman signed a bill in 1948 proclaiming February 1 "National Freedom Day" in honor of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, a first step in nationally commemorating the freeing of slaves and freedom for all; and

WHEREAS, for more than one hundred thirty-seven (137) years, "Juneteenth National Freedom Day" continues to be the most recognized African-American holiday observance and is also known as "Emancipation Day," "Emancipation Celebration," "Freedom Day," "Jun-Jun," "Juneteenth Independence Day," and "Juneteenth"; and

WHEREAS, "Juneteenth National Freedom Day" commemorates the survival, due to God-given strength and determination, of African-Americans through extreme adversity, hardship, and triumph; and

WHEREAS, Americans of all colors, creeds, cultures, religions, and countries of origin, share in a common love of and respect for freedom, as well as the determination to protect their right to freedom through the democratic institutions by which the tenets of freedom are guaranteed and protected; and

WHEREAS, the nineteenth of June, along with the fourth of July, completes the cycle of freedom for Americans' Independence Day observance; and

WHEREAS, "Emancipation Day" is celebrated locally in Kentucky in cities such as Allenville on August 8, Bowling Green on June 12, and Covington on September 22; and

WHEREAS, Kentucky will join states such as Texas, Idaho, California, Florida, Delaware, and many others in enacting legislation to officially recognize "Juneteenth National Freedom Day";

NOW, THEREFORE,

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky:

SECTION 1. A NEW SECTION OF KRS CHAPTER 2 IS CREATED TO READ AS FOLLOWS:

The nineteenth of June each year shall be observed in Kentucky as "Juneteenth National Freedom Day."

The Governor shall proclaim June 19 of each year as "Juneteenth National Freedom Day" and will encourage all Kentuckians celebrating this day to honor and reflect on the significant roles that African-Americans have played in the history of the United States.

Approved March 11, 2005.