

**JEFFERSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

AGENDA REQUEST

TO: Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Adiel McKnight, Executive Assistant

DATE: June 12, 2023

SUBJECT: PROCLAMATION re: Proclaiming June 19, 2023 as Juneteenth, a Holiday Commemorating the End of Slavery in the United States

STATEMENT OF ISSUE:

Juneteenth is a holiday celebrating the emancipation of those who had been enslaved in the United States. Juneteenth is now celebrated annually on June 19 throughout the United States, and became an official Washington State holiday in 2021. It is commemorated on the anniversary date of June 19, 1865, two and a half years after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, when Union soldiers arrived in Galveston, Texas and proclaimed the last remaining slaves in the United States to be freed. While emancipation is celebrated on this day, the institution of slavery was still legal and existed in the Union border states until the ratification of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States on December 6, 1865, which abolished legal slavery in the U.S.

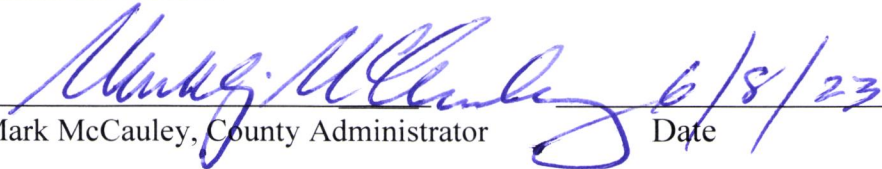
ANALYSIS:

The Washington State Legislature, in April 2021, passed a bill making Juneteenth an official, paid state holiday.

RECOMMENDATION:

Read and pass the Juneteenth Proclamation in recognition of our nation's history and as a re-commitment to identifying where racism persists and work to confront injustice in Jefferson County.

REVIEWED BY:



Mark McCauley, County Administrator Date 6/8/23

PROCLAMATION

Whereas, on June 19th, 1865, two and a half years after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, Union soldiers arrived in Galveston, Texas and proclaimed the last remaining slaves in the United States to be freed; and,

Whereas, this day marks the emancipation of all slaves, the institution of slavery was still legal and existed in the Union border states until the ratification of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States on December 6, 1865, which abolished slavery entirely in all of the U.S. states and territories; and,

Whereas, since 1866, Juneteenth has been widely celebrated with cultural festivities to mark the end of a defining and painful era in US history; and,

Whereas, millions of enslaved Africans were brought to North America where they were tortured and endured unthinkable tragedies, resulting in trauma that has endured through generations; and,

Whereas, freed slaves and their kin faced discrimination in nearly every aspect of life after emancipation, including access to housing, equal pay, the ability to vote, freedom to attend public schools, access to banking and land purchase, to name only a few; and,

Whereas, the wealth and economy of the United States was built on the backs of enslaved people and on the land of Indigenous peoples, the economic legacy of American racism has resulted in intractable poverty due to lack of access to higher education, low rates of home ownership, and lack of investment in African American and other disadvantaged communities to this day. This systemic economic discrimination has prevented the attainment of prosperity, an American ideal, for generations; and,

Whereas, systemic racism is evident in the criminal justice system, where for hundreds of years African Americans have far too often been unfairly profiled as offenders, denied access to due process and justice, given longer sentences than their white counterparts, and occupy a disproportionate share of death at the hands of law enforcement, jails, prisons and death row; and,

Whereas, Jefferson County has, like most Counties, a history of racism dating from its inception as a result of the United States of America colonizing the land of the indigenous peoples who had stewarded these lands and waters from time immemorial- the Sklallam, Chimacum, Twanoh, Skokomish, Makah, Hoh, Quileute, Ozette, Suquamish, Quinault and others; and,

Whereas, racism lives on to this day across the Olympic Peninsula from overt acts like the predatory stopping and detaining of immigrants, to the more subtle judgments and biases felt by black, indigenous and other people of color every day; and,

Whereas, many residents of Jefferson County and the United States are calling for reforming of systems that perpetuate the ongoing injustice and economic disparity that have defined our country for far too long, largely based on the color of one's skin; and,

Whereas, in April, 2021 the Washington State Legislature passed a bill making Juneteenth an official state holiday.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Jefferson County Board of County Commissioners, joins 49 states and countless jurisdictions in proclaiming June 19, 2023 to be

Juneteenth, a holiday celebrating African American liberation

in Jefferson County, and call for all residents to:

- Honor the culture and contributions that African Americans make to the fabric of our society and communities;
- Learn about and acknowledge the history and legacy of racism in the United States,
- Recognize that confronting racism is an American act in our country's foundational aspirations to form a pluralistic democracy and a more perfect union,
- Identify the ways that racism persists in perpetuating poverty and violence,
- Take personal responsibility to call out privilege and bias in ourselves, our communities and our institutions, and
- Recommit ourselves to achieving the American ideal of equality for all, and recognition that until Black Lives Matter, we have fallen short of that promise.

APPROVED this 12th day of June, 2023.

SEAL:

JEFFERSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Greg Brotherton, Chair

ATTEST:

Kate Dean, Member

Carolyn Gallaway, CMC
Clerk of the Board

Heidi Eisenhour, Member