

No. 2019-9

AN ACT

HB 619

Providing for the annual designation and holiday observance of June 19 as "Juneteenth National Freedom Day" in this Commonwealth.

The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hereby enacts as follows:

Section 1. Legislative findings.

The General Assembly hereby finds and declares as follows:

(1) Originating in Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865, when slaves in that state learned that they had been freed, "Juneteenth National Freedom Day" is the oldest African-American holiday observance in the United States.

(2) "Juneteenth National Freedom Day" commemorates the survival instinct of Africans who endured a transatlantic journey, known as the Middle Passage, on slave ships from their homeland to this country.

(3) Approximately 11.5 million Africans survived the harsh voyage to slave markets in the New World, and the slave population in America grew quickly.

(4) "Juneteenth National Freedom Day" further commemorates the impact of slavery, the abolition movement and African-American emancipation in the United States and has become a traditional celebration of independence, human rights and African-American culture in many communities.

(5) Recognition of "Juneteenth National Freedom Day" in this Commonwealth would encourage all governmental entities, civic organizations, schools and institutions of higher education in this Commonwealth to observe the day in a manner that emphasizes the meaning and importance of the end of slavery in the United States and to recognize and celebrate the importance of this day to every person who cherishes liberty and equality for all people.

(6) "Juneteenth National Freedom Day" is celebrated annually in at least 37 states nationwide.

Section 2. Designation.

June 19 is designated as "Juneteenth National Freedom Day" in this Commonwealth.

Section 3. Construction.

Nothing in this act shall be construed as requiring an employer to treat June 19 as a legal or official holiday or to provide paid leave to an employee on June 19 solely by virtue of the date being designated under this act.

Section 4. Effective date.

This act shall take effect immediately.

APPROVED—The 19th day of June, A.D. 2019

TOM WOLF