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SCR-145 Juneteenth. (2017-2018)

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Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 145

CHAPTER 112

Relative to Juneteenth.

[Filed with Secretary of State June 27, 2018.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 145, Bradford. Juneteenth.

This measure would recognize June 19, 2018, as Juneteenth and would urge the people of California to join in celebrating Juneteenth as a day to honor and reflect on the significant role that African Americans have played in the history of the United States and how they have enriched society through their steadfast commitment to promoting unity and equality.

Fiscal Committee: no

WHEREAS, Juneteenth, also known as "Juneteenth Independence Day," "Emancipation Day," "Emancipation Celebration," and "Freedom Day," is the oldest African American holiday observance in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth commemorates the strong survival instinct of African Americans who were first brought to this country stacked in the bottom of slave ships in a month-long journey across the Atlantic Ocean known as the "Middle Passage"; and

WHEREAS, Events in the history of the United States that led to the start of the Civil War in 1861 centered on sectional differences between the North and the South that were based on the economic and social divergence caused by the existence of slavery; and

WHEREAS, In 1862, the first clear signs that the end of slavery was imminent appeared when laws abolishing slavery were adopted in the territories of Oklahoma, Nebraska, Colorado, and New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, In September 1862, President Lincoln issued the celebrated Emancipation Proclamation, warning the rebellious Confederate states that he would declare their slaves "forever free" if those states did not return to the Union by January 1, 1863; and

WHEREAS, Enforcement of the Emancipation Proclamation occurred only in Confederate states that were under Union Army control; and

WHEREAS, On January 31, 1865, Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, abolishing slavery throughout the United States and its territories; and

WHEREAS, Spontaneous celebration erupted throughout the country when African Americans learned of their freedom; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth, or June 19, 1865, is considered the date when the last slaves in America were freed when General Gordon Granger rode into Galveston, Texas, and issued General Order No. 3, almost two and one-half years after President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation; and

WHEREAS, For former slaves, the Juneteenth celebration was a time for reassuring each other, praying, and gathering remaining family members together. Juneteenth continued to be highly revered in Texas decades later, with many former slaves and descendants making an annual pilgrimage back to Galveston on this date; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth education and celebrations declined in America in the early part of the 20th century. But the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s saw a resurgence of interest in Juneteenth, along with renewed community celebrations of the day; and

WHEREAS, Observance of Juneteenth, a reminder of emancipation, spread from Texas to the neighboring states of Louisiana, Arkansas, and Oklahoma, as well as Alabama, Florida, and California, where many African American Texans migrated; and

WHEREAS, The state of Texas is widely considered the first state to begin Juneteenth celebrations. Informal observances have taken place there for over a century and it has been an official state holiday in Texas since 1980. Thirty-nine states, including California since 2003, and the District of Columbia have recognized Juneteenth as either a state holiday or a state holiday observance; and

WHEREAS, In 1994, the era of the "Modern Juneteenth Movement" began when a group of Juneteenth leaders from across the country gathered in New Orleans, Louisiana, to work for greater national recognition of Juneteenth; and

WHEREAS, Today, Juneteenth commemorates African American freedom and emphasizes education and achievement. It is a day, a week, and in some areas, a month marked with celebrations, guest speakers, picnics, and family gatherings. It is a time for reflection and rejoicing. It is a time for assessment, self-improvement, and planning for the future; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth symbolizes freedom, celebrates the abolishment of slavery, and reminds all Americans of the significant contributions of African Americans to our society; and

WHEREAS, A growing number of American and African American cultural institutions have sponsored Juneteenth cultural events designed to make all Americans aware of this celebration; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth celebrations are a tribute to those African Americans who fought so long and worked so hard to make the dream of equality a reality; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That the Legislature of the State of California hereby recognizes June 19, 2018, as Juneteenth; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature urges the people of California to join in celebrating Juneteenth as a day to honor and reflect on the significant role that African Americans have played in the history of the United States and how they have enriched society through their steadfast commitment to promoting unity and equality; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.