

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Signs Legislation Designating Juneteenth as a State and Public Holiday

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TRENTON – Governor Phil Murphy today signed legislation (S19), which designates the third Friday in June as a State and public holiday, known as Juneteenth Day. Juneteenth commemorates June 19, 1865, when Union General Gordon Granger rode into Galveston, Texas to inform enslaved people of the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation and their freedom.

“It gives me great pride to celebrate emancipation and New Jersey’s great diversity by designating Juneteenth as an official State holiday,” **said Governor Murphy**. “Commemorating this date is just one component of our collective approach to end a generational cycle of pain and injustice that has gone on for far too long. Every Juneteenth, we will celebrate the end of the physical chains which once held Black Americans down. While more work lies ahead to undo the oppression that remains, Juneteenth is important marker that reminds us of our mission to create a society that enables our Black communities to achieve the full equality which they deserve.”

“Juneteenth is a reminder that centuries later, not all of us are treated equally and that freedom and democracy are not a given. Our fight for civil rights and freedom from discrimination and oppression continues today,” **said Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver, who serves as Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs**. “Now, Juneteenth will forever be observed and celebrated so that we can collectively reflect upon the indelible mark that slavery has left on our country as we fight for meaningful reforms. I commend and thank Governor Murphy and the legislators who have chosen to make Juneteenth a State holiday.”

“I am a direct descendant of slavery. My great grandmother, my great-great grandmother, that is my family. It is not even a past stain,” **said SZA**. “It is a current reality that we are living through the post traumatic slave syndrome, the PTSD, and the effects of that currently, right now. Thank you, Governor Murphy for this.”

“Juneteenth marks a day of freedom for Black Americans who suffered the cruelty of slavery and an opportunity to honor the history and contributions of African Americans,” **said Senate President Steve Sweeney**. “This takes on greater significance as the entire country is confronting the racism and inequality that is the bitter legacy of slavery. We can use June 19th and the days that follow to undue past harms and renew our commitment to justice and equality for all.”

We have a lot to learn from our history and unfortunately the delay in ending slavery and the lasting impact the institution has on our country is not taught enough,” **said Senator Sandra Cunningham**. “We want everyone to remember that Juneteenth is part of the history of all Americans. Hopefully, through this law, as well as deeper education and a more honest review of our nation’s history, more New Jerseyans can realize the significance of Juneteenth and understand the systemic issues that have continued to plague our country since that day in 1865.”



“Juneteenth is not only a holiday on the ending of slavery in this country, but also a reflection on the history of slavery and the suffering sustained by the Black community since 1619,” **said Senator Ron Rice**. “Black history in this country is a continued battle for social progress, and right now we are seeing people from all backgrounds fight for that progress and improve upon what has been gained. I am glad more people are learning about Juneteenth because the more we educate people, the more we can start a dialogue on how to fix the racial divide in this country. I look forward to Juneteenth next year where everyone in New Jersey will celebrate and reflect together.”

“This is a way of recognizing the end of slavery in America as an important milestone in the Nation’s history,” **said Senator Joe Cryan**. “A state holiday won’t change everything, but it will provide a platform to increase the understanding of what has happened in the past so that we can learn from it. When we recognize the experiences of history, we are better for it. We can be enriched as a state and more able to move towards equality for everyone.”

In a joint-statement, Assemblymembers Jamel Holley, Benjie Wimberly, and Verlina Reynolds-Jackson said:

“We’re at another set of crossroads in this country’s history—just as we were in 1863— where we can decide to move humanity forward by once again acknowledging the wrongs committed against African Americans and taking bold action to correct them. A visual illustration of the impact of centuries of systematic and institutionalized racism has our country reeling over the question, ‘Why?’ Why does this continue to persist in our communities today? Juneteenth was a defining moment in American History, claiming the beginning of African American independence in this country. It is time for the commemoration of a pivotal moment in history to become an official state holiday, underscoring its importance to our communities and giving time for reflection on how far we have come and have to go to achieve equality and justice for all.”

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[Environment \(/governor/initiatives/#Environment\)](/governor/initiatives/#Environment)

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[Direct Appointments \(/governor/news/appointments\)](/governor/news/appointments)

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