

## ONE HUNDRED FIRST LEGISLATURE

## FIRST SESSION

## LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION 75

Introduced by Council, 11; Cook, 13.

WHEREAS, for more than 130 years, Juneteenth National Freedom Day has been the oldest and only African-American holiday observance in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth is also known as Emancipation Day, Emancipation Celebration, Freedom Day, and Jun-Jun; 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, approximately eleven and one-half million African-Americans survived the voyage to the New World - the number that died is likely greater; and

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

WHEREAS, President Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated as President of the United States in 1861, and believed and stated that the paramount object of the Civil War was to save the Union rather than save or destroy slavery; and

WHEREAS, President Abraham Lincoln also stated his wish

was that all men everywhere could be free, thus adding to a growing anticipation by slaves that their ultimate liberty was at hand; and

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

WHEREAS, in September of that same year, President Abraham Lincoln warned the eleven rebellious Confederate States that if they did not return to the Union by January 1, 1863, he would declare their slaves forever free via the celebrated Emancipation Proclamation; and

WHEREAS, enforcement of the Emancipation Proclamation only occurred in Confederate States once under Union Army control; and

WHEREAS, Congress subsequently passed the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution on January 31, 1865, abolishing slavery throughout the United States and its territories. However, news of this action reached the states at different times. It was not until June 19, 1865, that the message of freedom reached the slaves in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Arkansas, and California; and

WHEREAS, spontaneous celebration erupted throughout the country when African-Americans learned of their freedom. Juneteenth National Freedom Day illuminates the fact that slaves hated slavery and celebrated its abolishment with excitement and great joy. It is a reminder to all Americans of the status and importance of Americans of African descent as American citizens; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth has been an unofficial holiday observed and celebrated by thousands of African-Americans and other

cultures in various communities throughout the United States of America and around the world; and

WHEREAS, twenty-two states and the District of Columbia observe Juneteenth as an official state holiday: Those states are Alaska, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Washington, and Wyoming. Other states have passed resolutions: Colorado, Idaho, Oregon, and Virginia; and

WHEREAS, Governor Heineman, of the State of Nebraska, issued proclamations observing Juneteenth Day on June 19, 2007, and June 19, 2008.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA, FIRST SESSION:

1. That the Legislature recognizes June 19 as Juneteenth National Freedom Day and encourages celebration of this day to honor and reflect on the significant roles that African-Americans have played in the history of the United States.

2. That the Legislature acknowledges how African-Americans have enriched society through their steadfast commitment to promoting freedom, brotherhood, and equality.

3. That a copy of this resolution be sent to Brenda J. Council.