

Chapter 602

(House Bill 549)

AN ACT concerning

General Provisions – Commemorative Days – Juneteenth National Freedom Day

FOR the purpose of requiring the Governor annually to proclaim a certain day as Juneteenth National Freedom Day; providing for the effective date of certain provisions of this Act; providing for the termination of certain provisions of this Act; and generally relating to commemorative days.

BY adding to

Article – State Government
Section 13–413
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2009 Replacement Volume and 2013 Supplement)

BY renumbering

Article – General Provisions
Section 7–409 through 7–412
to be Section 7–410 through 7–413
Annotated Code of Maryland
(As enacted by Chapter 94 (4lr1244) of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2014)

BY adding

Article – General Provisions
Section 7–409
Annotated Code of Maryland
(As enacted by Chapter 94 (4lr1244) of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2014)

Preamble

WHEREAS, More than 140 years old, Juneteenth National Freedom Day is the oldest holiday in the United States commemorating the end of slavery; and

WHEREAS, Also known as “Emancipation Day”, “Emancipation Celebration”, “Freedom Day”, “Jun–Jun”, and “Juneteenth”, Juneteenth National Freedom Day commemorates the strong survival instinct of African Americans who were first brought to this country crowded into the bottom of slave ships in a month–long journey across the Atlantic Ocean known as the “Middle Passage”; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 11,500,000 African Americans survived the voyage to the New World – and the number who died during passage is likely greater – only to be subjected to whipping, castration, branding, and rape and forced to submit to slavery for more than 200 years after their arrival in the United States; and

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

WHEREAS, Abraham Lincoln, who was inaugurated as President of the United States in 1861, believed and stated that the paramount objective of the Civil War was to save the Union, rather than to destroy slavery, but in stating his wish that “all men everywhere could be free”, Lincoln added to the growing anticipation by slaves that their ultimate liberation 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 Oklahoma, Nebraska, Colorado, and New Mexico were passed; and

WHEREAS, By September 1862, President Lincoln had warned the 11 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, News of this action reached the states at different times, and 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 celebrations erupted throughout the country when African Americans learned of their freedom; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth National Freedom Day, which recalls how slaves hated slavery and celebrated its abolishment with excitement and great joy, serves as a reminder to all Americans of the status and importance of Americans of African descent; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – State Government

13–413.

THE GOVERNOR ANNUALLY SHALL PROCLAIM JUNE 19 AS JUNETEENTH NATIONAL FREEDOM DAY.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That Section(s) 7-409 through 7-412, respectively, of Article – General Provisions of the Annotated Code of Maryland be renumbered to be Section(s) 7-410 through 7-413, respectively.

SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – General Provisions

7-409.

THE GOVERNOR ANNUALLY SHALL PROCLAIM JUNE 19 AS JUNETEENTH NATIONAL FREEDOM DAY.

SECTION 4. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That Sections 2 and 3 of this Act shall take effect on the taking effect of Chapter 94 (4lr1244) of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2014. If Sections 2 and 3 of this Act takes effect, Section 1 of this Act shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.

SECTION 5. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That, subject to the provisions of Section 4 of this Act, this Act shall take effect June 1, 2014.

Approved by the Governor, May 15, 2014.