

HOUSE BILL 165

P1

2lr0341

By: **Delegates Stukes, Alston, Anderson, Arora, Boteler, Braveboy, Burns, Cane, Carr, Carter, Conaway, Davis, Gilchrist, Glenn, Gutierrez, Harrison, Haynes, Holmes, Howard, Ivey, Jones, Love, A. Miller, Mitchell, Myers, Nathan–Pulliam, Oaks, Pena–Melnik, Proctor, B. Robinson, Summers, Tarrant, V. Turner, Vallario, Walker, Washington, Wilson, and Zucker**

Introduced and read first time: January 24, 2012

Assigned to: Health and Government Operations

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **State Government – Commemorative Days – Juneteenth National Freedom**
3 **Day**

4 FOR the purpose of requiring the Governor annually to proclaim a certain day as
5 Juneteenth National Freedom Day; and generally relating to commemorative
6 days.

7 BY adding to

8 Article – State Government

9 Section 13–410

10 Annotated Code of Maryland

11 (2009 Replacement Volume and 2011 Supplement)

12 Preamble

13 WHEREAS, More than 140 years old, Juneteenth National Freedom Day is the
14 oldest and only African American holiday observance in the United States; and

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

20 WHEREAS, Approximately 11,500,000 African Americans survived the voyage
21 to the New World – and the number who died during passage is likely greater – only to

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 be subjected to whipping, castration, branding, and rape and forced to submit to
2 slavery for more than 200 years after their arrival in the United States; and

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

7 WHEREAS, Abraham Lincoln, who was inaugurated as President of the United
8 States in 1861, believed and stated that the paramount objective of the Civil War was
9 to save the Union, rather than to destroy slavery, but in stating his wish that “all men
10 everywhere could be free”, Lincoln added to the growing anticipation by slaves that
11 their ultimate liberation was at hand; and

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

15 WHEREAS, By September 1862, President Lincoln warned the 11 rebellious
16 Confederate states that if they did not return to the Union by January 1, 1863, he
17 would declare their slaves “forever free” via the celebrated Emancipation
18 Proclamation; and

19 WHEREAS, News of this action reached the states at different times, and it was
20 not until June 19, 1864, that the message of freedom reached the slaves in Texas,
21 Oklahoma, Louisiana, Arkansas, and California; and

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

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

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

30 **Article – State Government**

31 **13-410.**

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

34 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
35 June 1, 2012.