



Durbin, Duckworth Join Bipartisan Bill To Make Juneteenth A Federal Holiday

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) joined Senators Edward J. Markey (D-MA), Tina Smith (D-MN), Cory Booker (D-NJ), and Kamala D. Harris (D-CA) to introduce the *Juneteenth National Independence Day Act*, bipartisan legislation to make Juneteenth a federal holiday. “Juneteenth”, observed on June 19, commemorates the end of slavery in the United States and is also known as “Emancipation Day”, “Jubilee Day”, and “Juneteenth Independence Day”. On June 19, 1865, in Galveston, Texas, Major General Gordon Granger issued General Order No. 3, which announced that, in accordance with the Emancipation Proclamation, “all slaves are free”. Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee (TX-18) has introduced companion legislation, H.R.7232, in the House of Representatives.

Juneteenth currently is recognized by 46 states and the District of Columbia as an official state holiday or observance. In 1980, Texas was the first state to recognize Juneteenth as a paid holiday. This year marked the 155th anniversary of Juneteenth.

“Juneteenth reminds us that we must continue the fight to ensure equality, justice, and economic opportunity for all Americans, regardless of the color of their skin,” Durbin said. “This bill would recognize Juneteenth as a federal holiday to ensure we never forget slavery’s legacy on our nation’s history, but also how African Americans, through the years, have turned a time of confusion and resistance into a celebration of community, freedom, and an opportunity to commemorate when all people were finally free in America.”

“155 years ago, word finally spread to Galveston, Texas, that the enslavement of Black Americans had ended. It was a day of celebration, and in the century and a half since, Juneteenth has symbolized progress and how far our nation has come,” Duckworth said. “After weeks of recent nationwide protests over countless murders of Black men and women by police, it’s all too obvious of how far we still have to go. By recognizing Juneteenth as a federal holiday, Americans will have the opportunity to not only observe

the abolishment of the enslavement of Black Americans, but to honor and reflect on the history, struggles and achievements of Black Americans as well.”

Joining Durbin, Duckworth, Markey, Smith, Booker, and Harris in introducing the bill include Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Michael Bennet (D-CO), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Susan Collins (R-ME), Kevin Cramer (R-ND), Mike Crapo (R-ID), Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Bob Casey (D-PA), Chris Coons (D-DE), Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Joni Ernst (R-IA), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Deb Fischer (R-NE), Cory Gardner (R-CO), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Josh Hawley (R-MO), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Angus King (I-ME), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), Patty Murray (D-WA), James Risch (R-ID), Jacky Rosen (D-NV), Marco Rubio (R-FL), Bernie Sanders (D-VT), Tim Scott (R-SC), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Ron Wyden (D-OR), and Todd Young (R-IN).