



2025 SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 74

June 27, 2025 - Introduced by Senators DRAKE, L. JOHNSON, CARPENTER, DASSLER-ALFHEIM, HABUSH SINYKIN, HESSELBEIN, HUTTON, KEYESKI, LARSON, PFAFF, RATCLIFF, ROYS, SMITH, SPREITZER, TOMCZYK, WALL and WANGGAARD, cosponsored by Representatives HAYWOOD, TAYLOR, ARNEY, STUBBS, MOORE OMOKUNDE, MADISON, GOODWIN, RIVERA-WAGNER, ALLEN, ANDERSON, BARE, BILLINGS, BROWN, CLANCY, CRUZ, DESMIDT, DOYLE, EMERSON, FITZGERALD, HONG, HYSELL, J. JACOBSON, JOERS, KIRSCH, MAYADEV, MCCARVILLE, MIRESE, NEUBAUER, O'CONNOR, ORTIZ-VELEZ, PALMERI, PHELPS, PRADO, ROE, SHEEHAN, SINICKI, SNODGRASS, SPAUDE, SUBECK, STROUD, TENORIO and UDELL. Referred to Committee on Senate Organization.

1 **Relating to:** recognizing June 19, 2025, as Juneteenth Day in Wisconsin.

2 Whereas, Juneteenth is the oldest known celebration commemorating the
3 ending of slavery in the United States. Dating back to 1865, it was on June 19th
4 that Union soldiers, led by Major General Gordon Granger, landed at Galveston,
5 Texas, with news that the war had ended and that the enslaved were now free; and

6 Whereas, this was two and a half years after President Lincoln's
7 Emancipation Proclamation, which had become official on January 1, 1863. The
8 Emancipation Proclamation had little impact on Texans due to the minimal
9 number of Union troops to enforce the new Executive Order. However, with the
10 surrender of General Lee in April 1865 and the arrival of General Granger's
11 regiment, the forces were finally strong enough to influence and overcome the
12 resistance; and

13 Whereas, attempts to explain this two-and-a-half-year delay in the receipt of
14 this important news have yielded several versions that have been handed down

1 through the years. Often told is the story of a messenger who was murdered on his
2 way to Texas with the news of freedom. Another is that the news was deliberately
3 withheld by the enslavers to maintain the labor force on plantations. Another
4 claims that federal troops actually waited for the slave owners to reap the benefits
5 of one last cotton harvest before going to Texas to enforce the Emancipation
6 Proclamation. All or none of these versions could be true. Certainly, for some,
7 President Lincoln's authority over the rebellious states was in question. For
8 whatever the reasons, conditions in Texas remained status quo well beyond what
9 was statutory; and

10 Whereas, slavery in the United States lasted over 250 years and enslaved
11 millions of African Americans in horrific conditions throughout all regions in the
12 United States, including in Wisconsin, where hundreds of slaves were held illegally;
13 and

14 Whereas, Juneteenth Day is observed at some level in every state in the nation
15 and was made a federal holiday on June 17, 2021; and

16 Whereas, Juneteenth Day has come to signify a celebration of African
17 American freedom, achievement, and history. This holiday brings the African
18 American community and persons of all races together in the fight for equality, and
19 it is important as legislators to promote solidarity in this effort; and

20 Whereas, Wisconsin has one of the nation's oldest and longest-running
21 Juneteenth celebrations due to Milwaukee's first celebration in 1971, which began
22 when then-Northcott staff member Margaret Rogers told others how much she had
23 enjoyed a Juneteenth Day celebration in Georgia. Based on Rogers's experience,
24 Northcott decided to begin a similar tradition in Milwaukee—spearheaded in its

early days by festival executive director Marvin Hannah and coordinator Jan Kemp-Cole—and the festival soon became the unofficial opening of summer; and

Whereas, Juneteenth Day is typically celebrated in ways such as public readings of the Emancipation Proclamation, educational activities, parades, community festivals, and family gatherings; and

Whereas, Juneteenth Day provides a time for a reflection on the history of the institution of slavery in the United States and Wisconsin, provides an opportunity to educate Americans about the history of slavery and emancipation, and provides an occasion to celebrate the continuing advancement of African Americans and freedom in the United States; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the senate, the assembly concurring, That the legislature hereby proclaims June 19, 2025, as Juneteenth Day in Wisconsin.

(END)