



April 28, 2021

Making Juneteenth a Holiday

Illinois is one step closer to making Juneteenth an official state holiday after House Bill 3922, which I introduced, recently passed with bipartisan support in the House. The legislation is now in the Senate. I introduced similar legislation, HB 3967, in the last General Assembly.

Every year, Juneteenth reminds us of the historic struggle and sacrifice that Black Americans faced while enslaved in America, and the consequences that continue to affect all of us today. By making Juneteenth a state holiday, we are rightfully elevating it and ensuring that residents have the opportunity to pause and consider the important steps our nation has taken to combat injustice and all of the work that still remains.

House Bill 3922 would celebrate June 19 each year as Juneteenth National Freedom Day throughout the state. It builds on current recognition for the day by requiring state offices, public schools and other entities affected by state holidays to close.

Juneteenth recognizes the announced ending of slavery by Union forces in Texas on June 19, 1865, years after President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation had outlawed slavery in rebellious territories that included Texas. Juneteenth celebrates the Emancipation Proclamation which actually happened two years earlier, but those in Texas hadn't heard about it yet due to their oppression. Ratification of the 13th Amendment later that year would finally end slavery in all parts of the country, including areas not initially covered by the Emancipation Proclamation. Juneteenth remains the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the end of slavery in the United States.

Recognizing Juneteenth statewide sends a message of unity. Governor Pritzker has indicated he is supportive of commemorating Juneteenth as an official state holiday, and I look forward to passing this proposal through the General Assembly and getting it to his desk very soon.

Let's make Juneteenth a holiday in Illinois, as we take action as a state to continue to fight racism in all its forms.

Sincerely,

La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District