



PRESS RELEASE

OREGON HOUSE DEMOCRATS

For Immediate Release
April 9, 2021

For more information, contact:
Hannah Kurowski
Hannah.kurowski@oregonlegislature.gov

Oregon House Passes Bill Making Juneteenth Official State Holiday

HB 2168 will establish Juneteenth as an official state holiday, commemorating the emancipation of enslaved peoples in the U.S. and celebrating the dignity, freedom and contributions of Black Americans

SALEM, OR—The Oregon House passed [House Bill 2168](#), which would make Juneteenth an official state holiday. Juneteenth commemorates the emancipation of enslaved peoples in the U.S., while also celebrating the dignity, freedom and contributions made by Black Americans. The bill formally establishes Juneteenth on June 19.

In 1945, Clara Peoples introduced Juneteenth to Oregon during her work break, celebrating the day at the Vanport shipyards. Peoples and Black Oregonians have made long-lasting contributions to Oregon’s history and cultural legacy that have led us to this moment.

“We remember the legacy of Clara Peoples, ‘Mother of Juneteenth,’ and the annual celebrations that kept this tradition alive long before this holiday was officially recognized,” said [Rep. Janelle Bynum \(D- Clackamas\)](#), Chair of the BIPOC Caucus.

In Oregon, the Legislative Assembly adopted Senate Joint Resolution 31 in 2001, to declare observance of "Juneteenth, June 19 of each year, to be a day for celebration statewide of the dignity and freedom of all citizens."

“By making Juneteenth an official state holiday, we can both confront and acknowledge our shameful history of racial discrimination and white supremacist violence, while celebrating and recognizing the contributions Black Americans have made and continue to make in the face of systemic inequities,” said [House Majority Leader Barbara Smith Warner \(D-Portland\)](#), chief sponsor of the bill. “Juneteenth can help Oregon look to a future of racial equity and justice.”

The first Juneteenth celebrations began in Texas in 1866 where Black communities gathered for parades, cookouts, prayer gatherings, historical and cultural readings, as well as musical performances.

In 1980 Texas officially made the day a holiday and since 47 states and the District of Columbia have commemorated the day by marking it either as a state holiday or observance.

The bill passed the House with bipartisan support and now moves to the Senate.

###