



OREGON SENATE DEMOCRATS

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Oregon Senate Approves Juneteenth as Official State Holiday

SALEM – Today, the Oregon Senate passed House Bill 2168, a bill to make Juneteenth an official state holiday every June 19 beginning in 2022. This holiday will serve to honor the freedom of enslaved people in the United States, acknowledge Oregon’s racist roots, and celebrate the contributions of Black Americans in the face of inequity and systemic oppression.

“The Emancipation Proclamation news arrived in waves to the enslaved Black women and men of my family,” said Senator Lew Frederick (D-N/NE Portland) who carried House Bill 2168. “Family stories say, ‘joy was the first emotion, and next skepticism’.”

“However, hope stood at the center of a possible future for my family and so many families,” added Senator Frederick. “That hope continues to this day. So does the skepticism. The two can dance together, and in that dance, we can progress, and we can amplify hope.”

On June 19, 1865 Union General Gordon Granger rode into Galveston, Texas and issued General Order Number 3, which required the immediate freedom of more than 250,000 enslaved African Americans in Texas. Union troops marched throughout Galveston to spread the word that all slaves were free. Juneteenth is also known as Emancipation Day, Jubilee Day and Freedom Day.

In Oregon, the Peoples family are well known for their efforts to ensure Juneteenth is observed. “Miss Clara Peoples is foundational to Oregon, her family is the reason we have unofficially observed this holiday and the Peoples have remained central in framing the expectation of a more equitable tomorrow,” said Senator Frederick.

“Juneteenth is not the date all slaves were freed. Juneteenth is not the date that Black Americans, or Black Oregonians, were guaranteed comfort, relief or safety,” said Senator Frederick. “Also, Juneteenth was a step forward and a marker of hope, one we must continue to build upon. This official holiday will recognize that the people of Oregon, despite our past, can take the veil of ignorance away, and each year choose to have hope – on Juneteenth and every day thereafter.”

“With House Bill 2168, we can learn from another time. We can change the future now, in real time. We can work towards equality – even without a declaration or official holiday. We must. Celebrating Juneteenth will help each of us remember all that we can and must do to ensure a more just future,” concluded Senator Frederick.

House Bill 2168 passed the Oregon Senate unanimously, it now goes to the House of Representatives for concurrence.

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