



AL COUNCILMAN
8TH DISTRICT
AUSTIN

R-18

REVISED

Date: June 1, 2021

To: Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Al Austin II, Eighth District
Councilwoman Mary Zendejas, First District
Vice Mayor Rex Richardson, Ninth District

Subject: Recognizing Juneteenth as a Day of Celebration

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Declare Juneteenth as a Day of Celebration in Long Beach, request the City Attorney to draft a resolution calling on President Biden and Congress to make Juneteenth a national holiday and Governor Newsom and the California State Legislature to make it a state holiday, and refer to the Federal Legislation Committee and State Legislation Committee for consideration of inclusion in the City's Legislative Agendas.

BACKGROUND:

Juneteenth is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States.

On June 19, 1865, Union soldiers, led by Major General Gordon Granger, landed at Galveston, Texas with word that the Civil War had ended and that those enslaved were now free, even though President Abraham Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation more than two years earlier.

The celebration of June 19th was coined "Juneteenth" (a combination of June and Nineteenth), and what began as a celebration for former slaves and their descendants in Texas, has become a national day of pride with celebrations in communities throughout the country. Today, Juneteenth celebrates African American freedom, cultural contributions and achievement, while encouraging continuous self-development and respect for all cultures.

The Juneteenth National Independence Day Act has been re-introduced in both the House of Representatives and U.S. Senate to make Juneteenth a federal holiday. Juneteenth is currently recognized by 49 states and the District of Columbia as an official state holiday or observance.

As Vice President Kamala Harris said last year as California's Senator, "On Juneteenth, we remember the millions who suffered, died, and survived the crushing reality of slavery in America, and recommit ourselves to continuing in the fight for equal justice for all."

Long Beach has held Juneteenth celebrations several years in the past. This year, as COVID

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restrictions are lifted, a Juneteenth celebration is planned for Saturday, June 19 on Pine Avenue in Downtown Long Beach. The event, which could become one of the premier Juneteenth celebrations in Southern California, will feature a variety of music, including blues, jazz, gospel, and traditional African drumming, as well as a step show, poetry and guest speakers.

Long Beach is a leader in celebrating our diversity and supporting social justice and equity in our City and fostering mutual respect and understanding for all. As such, Long Beach should declare Juneteenth as a Day of Celebration in Long Beach and add our voice in the call to make Juneteenth a national holiday.

FISCAL IMPACT: A fiscal impact analysis was not able to be conducted for this item due to the time sensitivity of placing it on the agenda.