ANDY BESHEAR
GOVERNOR

EXECUTIVE ORDER

2024-355
May 23, 2024

Secretary of State
Frankfort
Kentucky

RECOGNIZING JUNETEENTH NATIONAL FREEDOM DAY AS A DAY OF THANKSGIVING

During the Civil War, more than 200,000 African Americans courageously fought in the Union armed forces to secure their freedom from slavery and preserve this Union. Many of these brave soldiers sacrificed their lives for the ultimate freedom of their families.

On June 19, 1865, Major General Gordon Granger led Union soldiers into Galveston, Texas, to bring news that the Civil War had ended and to read General Order #3, which stated that in accordance with President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation all enslaved African American people were free and entitled to absolute equality of personal and property rights. This statement unjustly and unconscionably came two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation, leaving African Americans enslaved even though President Lincoln had freed them. Senselessly, many African Americans also remained enslaved after June 19, 1965.

June 19th became the emancipation date of enslaved African Americans who had long suffered and fought for freedom, justice and equality. Each year, Americans celebrate Juneteenth on June 19th to honor and reflect on the significant roles that African Americans have played in the history of the United States, and to celebrate the history, journey and culture of African Americans. Juneteenth commemorates the strength and courage of African Americans, their contributions to the building of American institutions, wealth and innovations, and their ultimate triumph over extreme adversity through sheer determination and overwhelming tenacity.

Certainly, all Kentuckians should give thanks to and celebrate the freedom of enslaved African Americans and their immense contributions to the United States.

In 2021, the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act made Juneteenth a federal holiday – the first new federal holiday since Martin Luther King, Jr. Day became a federal holiday nearly 40 years earlier. At least 28 states and the District of Columbia observe

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Juneteenth as a holiday.

Kentuckians must continue to work together toward a more equitable and just Commonwealth, while recognizing the horrors of slavery and its legacy. Recognition of Juneteenth reflects the Commonwealth's resounding belief in liberty and equality for every citizen. Under KRS 2.147, Juneteenth is observed in Kentucky as Juneteenth National Freedom Day, as I have proclaimed each year as Governor.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Andy Beshear, Governor of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, by virtue of authority vested in me by the Kentucky Constitution, and KRS 2.110 and KRS 2.147, do hereby **ORDER** and **DIRECT** the following:

1. June 19th shall be observed in the Commonwealth of Kentucky as Juneteenth National Freedom Day and is appointed as a day of thanksgiving and a holiday in the Commonwealth.

2. All Executive Branch offices shall be closed on June 19th of each year, beginning with June 19, 2024. All Executive Branch employees shall be given a holiday on this annual day of thanksgiving.

3. If June 19th falls on a Saturday, the preceding Friday shall be observed as the day of thanksgiving and holiday. If June 19th falls on a Sunday, the following Monday shall be observed as the day of thanksgiving and holiday.

4. The Secretary of the Personnel Cabinet shall take all necessary steps to implement this Order.

5. Nothing in this Order should be interpreted to interfere with or infringe on the powers of the legislative and judicial branches, or other constitutional officers, to perform their constitutional duties or exercise their authority. However, the legislative and judicial branches, and other constitutional officers, are encouraged to adopt or incorporate the provisions of this Order.

This Order is effective May 23, 2024.

ANDY BESHEAR, Governor
Commonwealth of Kentucky

MICHAEL G. ADAMS
Secretary of State

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DATE 5/24/2024

MICHAEL G. ADAMS
SECRETARY OF STATE
COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY
BY Katherine Ellis