

SR-205, As Adopted by Senate, June 10, 2008

Senator Scott offered the following resolution:

Senate Resolution No. 205.

A resolution commemorating the 4th Annual State Holiday Juneteenth Celebration.

Whereas, June 19, 1865, became the historic day that recognizes the true emancipation of slaves in the United States, becoming the oldest-known celebration of the end of slavery; and

Whereas, Slavery was officially abolished by the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. However, many Western states were either unaware of the executive order or lacked the Union troops to enforce it. It wasn't until two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued by President Abraham Lincoln that the slaves in the state of Texas were finally made aware that the atrocity of slavery was over. They filled the streets and a spontaneous celebration erupted. This symbolic day of jubilation continued in the years that followed; and

Whereas, The first Juneteenth celebrations were more political gatherings and rallies held to teach African Americans about their new rights as American citizens. But as former slaves and their descendents continued to return to the South to commemorate Juneteenth, the gatherings turned into huge celebrations of freedom; and

Whereas, Juneteenth celebrations established many traditions, including formal thanksgiving prayers and religious ceremonies. Participants sang "Lift Every Voice and Sing" and listened to readings of the Emancipation Proclamation; and

Whereas, Juneteenth participation began to decrease in the early 1920s. During the Civil Rights movement, Juneteenth celebrations slowly re-emerged with the celebrations also focusing on education and appreciation of African-American history and culture; and

Whereas, In 1980, a bill sponsored by State Representative Al Edwards passed in Texas making Juneteenth "Emancipation Day in Texas" and a legal state holiday. The bill renewed interest in Juneteenth that spread further across the country; and

Whereas, While Texas was the first state to legalize the holiday, on May 31, 2005, the Michigan Senate passed Senate Bill No. 384 – now PA 48 – calling for the third Saturday in June to be named Juneteenth National Freedom Day. The legislation recognizes the inhumanity and cruelty associated with the act of slavery and celebrates the freedom of all people living in the United States; and

Whereas, Michigan is one of 29 states across the country that now recognizes Juneteenth as an official holiday; and

Whereas, Juneteenth celebrations will be taking place this year in cities across Michigan, including Lansing, Grand Rapids, Flint, Saginaw, Detroit, Battle Creek, Jackson, and Albion, among others; and

Whereas, The Lansing Juneteenth Committee and honorary co-hosts, including Speaker of the House Andy Dillon, Senate Minority Leader Mark Schauer, Senator Martha G. Scott, Senator Gretchen Whitmer, Representative Joan Bauer, Representative Barb Byrum, Representative Rick Jones, Representative Mark Meadows, Representative Brenda Clack, and the Michigan Legislative Black Caucus, invite all citizens of Michigan to join them at the 4th Annual State Holiday Juneteenth Celebration. The State Capitol Kick-off and Opening Ceremony will take place on Thursday, June 19, 2008, at 5:30 p.m. on the steps of the State Capitol; and

Whereas, Juneteenth is only one day out of the year. Let us look at this day as a chance to reflect upon our past and to inspire us for the challenges that still lie ahead; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate, That we hereby commemorate the 4th Annual State Holiday Juneteenth Celebration, with a State Capitol Kick-off and Opening Ceremony to be held on June 19, 2008; and be it further

Resolved, That a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the organizers of this event, the Lansing Juneteenth Committee, as evidence of our esteem for their dedication and commitment to the Juneteenth celebration.