

**SUBSTITUTE FOR  
SENATE BILL NO. 384**

A bill to designate the third Saturday in June as Juneteenth National Freedom Day; and to designate November 26 of each year as Sojourner Truth Day in the state of Michigan.

**THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF MICHIGAN ENACT:**

1       Sec. 1. (1) The legislature recognizes that slavery existed in  
2 this country for more than 200 years. Millions of African-Americans  
3 were brought to this country as slaves stacked in the bottom of  
4 slave ships in a 5- to 12-week journey across the Atlantic Ocean  
5 known as the "middle passage". Although approximately 11-1/2  
6 million African-Americans survived the voyage across the ocean, the  
7 number of those who died in the inhuman conditions of the passage  
8 is probably even higher. Once in this country, the captives were

1 subjected to whipping, castration, branding, and rape. The  
2 legislature further observes that congress passed the thirteenth  
3 amendment to the United States constitution on January 31, 1865,  
4 abolishing slavery throughout the United States and its  
5 territories. In the following months, spontaneous celebrations  
6 erupted throughout the country whenever African-Americans learned  
7 of their freedom. News of the amendment reached the states at  
8 different times, and it was not until June 19, 1865 that the  
9 message of freedom reached the slaves in the western states. In  
10 honor of this great moment in the history of our nation, the  
11 legislature declares that the third Saturday in June of each year  
12 shall be known as "Juneteenth National Freedom Day". The  
13 legislature encourages individuals, educational institutions, and  
14 social, community, religious, labor, and business organizations to  
15 pause on Juneteenth National Freedom Day and reflect upon the  
16 strong survival instinct of the African-American slaves and the  
17 excitement and great joy with which African-Americans first  
18 celebrated the abolition of slavery. It is a reminder to all  
19 Americans of the status and importance of Americans of African  
20 descent as American citizens.

21 (2) The legislature recognizes the fundamental contribution  
22 Sojourner Truth made to the cause of abolition of slavery and the  
23 establishment of equal rights for women and to several other  
24 significant social reform and human justice movements in the  
25 nineteenth century. Truth toured the nation for over 40 years as a  
26 forceful and passionate advocate for the dispossessed, using her  
27 quick wit and fearless tongue to deliver her message of equality

1 and justice. She lived in Battle Creek, Michigan, from 1857 until  
2 her death on November 26, 1883. Empowered by her religious faith,  
3 the former slave worked tirelessly for many years to transform  
4 national attitudes and institutions. According to Nell Painter,  
5 Princeton professor and Truth biographer, "No other woman who had  
6 gone through the ordeal of slavery managed to survive with  
7 sufficient strength, poise, and self-confidence to become a public  
8 presence over the long term". Designating Sojourner Truth Day in  
9 the state of Michigan will not only acknowledge the importance of  
10 this national figure in the antislavery and human justice  
11 movements, but will also recognize her strong ties to the state  
12 during her 26 years of residence here. In recognition of this  
13 great woman, the legislature declares November 26 of each year to  
14 be known as "Sojourner Truth Day".