

SENATE BILL No. 384

April 14, 2005, Introduced by Senators SCOTT, SCHAUER, GOSCHKA, THOMAS, BRATER, CLARKE, SWITALSKI, JACOBS, CLARK-COLEMAN, HARDIMAN, BASHAM, CHERRY and OLSHOVE and referred to the Committee on Local, Urban and State Affairs.

A bill to designate the third Saturday in June as Juneteenth national freedom day.

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
9 subjected to whipping, castration, branding, and rape.

10 (2) The legislature further observes that congress passed the

1 thirteenth amendment to the United States constitution on January
2 31, 1865, abolishing slavery throughout the United States and its
3 territories. In the following months, spontaneous celebrations
4 erupted throughout the country whenever African-Americans learned
5 of their freedom. News of the amendment reached the states at
6 different times, and it was not until June 19, 1865 that the
7 message of freedom reached the slaves in the western states. In
8 honor of this great moment in the history of our nation, the
9 legislature declares that the third Saturday in June of each year
10 shall be known as "Juneteenth National Freedom Day".

11 (3) The legislature encourages individuals, educational
12 institutions, and social, community, religious, labor, and business
13 organizations to pause on Juneteenth national freedom day and
14 reflect upon the strong survival instinct of the African-American
15 slaves and the excitement and great joy with which African-
16 Americans first celebrated the abolition of slavery. It is a
17 reminder to all Americans of the status and importance of Americans
18 of African descent as American citizens.