

SENATE BILL NO. 554

June 17, 2021, Introduced by Senators SANTANA, BULLOCK, ALEXANDER, WOJNO, POLEHANKI, BAYER and IRWIN and referred to the Committee on Government Operations.

A bill to amend 2005 PA 48, entitled

"An act 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,"

by amending section 1 (MCL 435.361).

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

1 million African-Americans survived the voyage across the ocean, the
 2 number of those who died in the inhuman conditions of the passage
 3 is probably even higher. Once in this country, the captives were
 4 subjected to whipping, castration, branding, and rape. The
 5 legislature further observes that ~~congress passed the thirteenth~~
 6 ~~amendment to the United States constitution on January 31, 1865,~~
 7 ~~abolishing slavery throughout the United States and its~~
 8 ~~territories.~~ **President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation**
 9 **became effective on January 1, 1863 and declared all slaves in**
 10 **Confederate-controlled areas were free.** In the following months,
 11 spontaneous celebrations erupted throughout the country whenever
 12 African-Americans learned of their freedom. News of the ~~amendment~~
 13 **Emancipation Proclamation** reached the states at different times,
 14 and it was not until June 19, 1865 that the message of freedom
 15 reached the slaves in the western states. In honor of this great
 16 moment in the history of our nation, the legislature declares that
 17 the third Saturday in June of each year shall be known as
 18 "Juneteenth National Freedom Day". The legislature encourages
 19 individuals, educational institutions, and social, community,
 20 religious, labor, and business organizations to pause on Juneteenth
 21 National Freedom Day and reflect upon the strong survival instinct
 22 of the African-American slaves and the excitement and great joy
 23 with which African-Americans first celebrated the ~~abolition of~~
 24 **emancipation from** slavery. It is a reminder to all Americans of the
 25 status and importance of Americans of African descent as American
 26 citizens.

27 (2) The legislature recognizes the fundamental contribution
 28 Sojourner Truth made to the cause of abolition of slavery, ~~and to~~
 29 the establishment of equal rights for women, and to several other

1 significant social reform and human justice movements in the
2 nineteenth century. Truth toured the nation for ~~over~~**more than** 40
3 years as a forceful and passionate advocate for the dispossessed,
4 using her quick wit and fearless tongue to deliver her message of
5 equality and justice. She lived in Battle Creek, Michigan, from
6 1857 until her death on November 26, 1883. Empowered by her
7 religious faith, the former slave worked tirelessly for many years
8 to transform national attitudes and institutions. According to Nell
9 Painter, Princeton professor and Truth biographer, "No other woman
10 who had gone through the ordeal of slavery managed to survive with
11 sufficient strength, poise, and self-confidence to become a public
12 presence over the long term". Designating Sojourner Truth Day in
13 ~~the state of Michigan~~**this state** will not only acknowledge the
14 importance of this national figure in the antislavery and human
15 justice movements, but will also recognize her strong ties to the
16 state during her 26 years of residence here. In recognition of this
17 great woman, the legislature declares November 26 of each year to
18 be known as "Sojourner Truth Day".