JUNETEENTH NATIONAL FREEDOM DAY; SOJOURNER TRUTH DAY
Act 48 of 2005

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.

History: 2005, Act 48, Imd. Eff. June 17, 2005.

The People of the State of Michigan enact:

435.361 Juneteenth National Freedom Day; Sojourner Truth Day.

Sec. 1. (1) The legislature recognizes that slavery existed in this country for more than 200 years. Millions of African-Americans were brought to this country as slaves stacked in the bottom of slave ships in a 5- to 12-week journey across the Atlantic Ocean known as the "middle passage". Although approximately 11-1/2 million African-Americans survived the voyage across the ocean, the number of those who died in the inhuman conditions of the passage is probably even higher. Once in this country, the captives were subjected to whipping, castration, branding, and rape. The legislature further observes that congress passed the thirteenth amendment to the United States constitution on January 31, 1865, abolishing slavery throughout the United States and its territories. In the following months, spontaneous celebrations erupted throughout the country whenever African-Americans learned of their freedom. News of the amendment reached the states at different times, and it was not until June 19, 1865 that the message of freedom reached the slaves in the western states. In honor of this great moment in the history of our nation, the legislature declares that the third Saturday in June of each year shall be known as "Juneteenth National Freedom Day". The legislature encourages individuals, educational institutions, and social, community, religious, labor, and business organizations to pause on Juneteenth National Freedom Day and reflect upon the strong survival instinct of the African-American slaves and the excitement and great joy with which African-Americans first celebrated the abolition of slavery. It is a reminder to all Americans of the status and importance of Americans of African descent as American citizens.

(2) The legislature recognizes the fundamental contribution Sojourner Truth made to the cause of abolition of slavery and the establishment of equal rights for women and to several other significant social reform and human justice movements in the nineteenth century. Truth toured the nation for over 40 years as a forceful and passionate advocate for the dispossessed, using her quick wit and fearless tongue to deliver her message of equality and justice. She lived in Battle Creek, Michigan, from 1857 until her death on November 26, 1883. Empowered by her religious faith, the former slave worked tirelessly for many years to transform national attitudes and institutions. According to Nell Painter, Princeton professor and Truth biographer, "No other woman who had gone through the ordeal of slavery managed to survive with sufficient strength, poise, and self-confidence to become a public presence over the long term". Designating Sojourner Truth Day in the state of Michigan will not only acknowledge the importance of this national figure in the antislavery and human justice movements, but will also recognize her strong ties to the state during her 26 years of residence here. In recognition of this great woman, the legislature declares November 26 of each year to be known as "Sojourner Truth Day".

History: 2005, Act 48, Imd. Eff. June 17, 2005.

CAUTION
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