

SENATE, No. 2711

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JULY 20, 2020

Sponsored by:
Senator JOSEPH P. CRYAN
District 20 (Union)

SYNOPSIS

Requires school districts to include instruction on significance of Juneteenth Independence Day as part of implementation of New Jersey Student Learning Standards in Social Studies.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 **AN ACT** concerning public school instruction on the significance of
2 Juneteenth Independence Day and supplementing chapter 35 of
3 Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

4
5 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
6 *of New Jersey:*

7
8 1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

9 a. Juneteenth Independence Day, also known as Juneteenth,
10 Emancipation Day and Black Independence Day, is the oldest
11 nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in
12 the United States.

13 b. Juneteenth commemorates the events of June 19, 1865, in
14 which Union soldiers, led by Major General Gordon Granger,
15 arrived in Galveston, Texas to announce the end of the Civil War
16 and that enslaved persons in the Confederate States were made free
17 through the Emancipation Proclamation.

18 c. Word of the ending of slavery in the Confederate States
19 finally reached the slaves in Texas approximately two and a half
20 years after the Emancipation Proclamation took effect on January 1,
21 1863.

22 d. The news was welcomed joyously and celebrated by the
23 hundreds of thousands of enslaved men, women, and children who
24 had continued to toil as slaves following the Emancipation
25 Proclamation and the end of the Civil War.

26 e. The celebration of Juneteenth symbolizes African American
27 freedom, celebrates the abolition of slavery, and reminds all
28 Americans of the significant contributions African Americans have
29 made to society. It is also a time for self-improvement and for
30 reflection and education on the United States' history regarding
31 slavery and its legacy.

32 f. A State law enacted in 2004 as P.L.2004, c.3 (C.36:2-80 et
33 seq.) designated the third Saturday in June of each year as
34 Juneteenth Independence Day in New Jersey to commemorate and
35 celebrate the emancipation of African Americans and foster respect
36 for all cultures.

37 g. While Juneteenth has gained growing interest, recognition,
38 and celebration among organizations and communities in the State
39 and across the country, there remains a continued need for
40 education and awareness of the event's historical impact. It is
41 paramount that all New Jersey residents continue to have a dialogue
42 surrounding the historical significance of Juneteenth, to promote
43 racial healing, reconciliation, restoration, and justice.

44 h. Although section 4 of P.L.2004, c.3 permits boards of
45 education to offer instruction on Juneteenth Independence Day at an
46 appropriate place in the curriculum, it is proper and fitting that the
47 State of New Jersey require instruction on the historical and cultural

1 significance of such an important day in United States history as
2 Juneteenth Independence Day.

3
4 2. a. A board of education shall include instruction on the
5 events and historical and cultural significance of Juneteenth
6 Independence Day, as part of the school district's implementation
7 of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in Social Studies.
8 The instruction shall be included in an appropriate place in the
9 curriculum of elementary school, middle school, and high school
10 students. The instruction shall provide students with information
11 on, at a minimum:

12 (1) the events that occurred on June 19, 1865, otherwise known
13 as Juneteenth Independence Day;

14 (2) the historical context in which Juneteenth Independence Day
15 occurred;

16 (3) why word of the end of the Civil War did not reach enslaved
17 persons in Texas until approximately two months after the war's
18 conclusion and why word of the Emancipation Proclamation did not
19 reach those individuals until nearly two and a half years after it took
20 effect; and

21 (4) what Juneteenth Independence Day means and symbolizes in
22 United States history and how communities across the country
23 celebrate and reflect on the day.

24 b. The Commissioner of Education shall provide school districts
25 with age-appropriate sample learning activities and resources
26 designed to enhance students' overall understanding of Juneteenth
27 Independence Day and its historical and cultural significance.

28
29 3. This act shall take effect immediately and shall first apply to
30 the first full school year following the date of enactment.

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33 STATEMENT

34
35 Juneteenth Independence Day is the oldest nationally celebrated
36 commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States. The
37 day commemorates the events of June 19, 1865, in which Union
38 soldiers, led by Major General Gordon Granger, arrived in
39 Galveston, Texas to announce the end of the Civil War and that the
40 enslaved were made free through the Emancipation Proclamation.
41 Today, the celebration of Juneteenth symbolizes African American
42 freedom, celebrates the abolition of slavery, and reminds all
43 Americans of the significant contributions African Americans have
44 made to society. It is also a time for self-improvement and for
45 reflection and education on the United States' history regarding
46 slavery and its legacy.

47 In 2004, a State law was enacted that designated the third
48 Saturday in June of each year as Juneteenth Independence Day in

1 New Jersey to commemorate and celebrate the emancipation of
2 African Americans and foster respect for all cultures. Pursuant to
3 that law, school districts were permitted to offer instruction
4 regarding the day at an appropriate place in the curriculum. This
5 bill would require school districts to provide instruction on the
6 events and historical and cultural significance of Juneteenth
7 Independence Day, as part of the school district's implementation
8 of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in Social Studies.
9 The instruction would provide students with information on, at a
10 minimum: the events that occurred on Juneteenth Independence
11 Day; the historical context in which Juneteenth Independence Day
12 occurred; why word of the end of the Civil War did not reach
13 enslaved persons in Texas until approximately two months after the
14 war's conclusion and why word of the Emancipation Proclamation
15 did not reach those individuals until nearly two and a half years
16 after it took effect; and what Juneteenth Independence Day means
17 and symbolizes in United States history and how communities
18 across the country celebrate and reflect on the day. Under the bill,
19 the Commissioner of Education will provide school districts with
20 age-appropriate sample learning activities and resources designed to
21 enhance students' overall understanding of Juneteenth
22 Independence Day and its historical and cultural significance.