



Tompkins County Legislature

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Proclamation

WHEREAS, Slavery came to North America in 1619 with the arrival of the first enslaved Africans to a colony in Virginia, and though President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation went into effect on January 1, 1863, more than two years passed before news of the liberation of slaves came to Texas and African Americans across the state were made aware of their right to freedom on June 19, 1865, the day that is officially recognized as the Juneteenth holiday, and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth commemorates the immense struggles and sacrifices of African Americans in their fight for freedom from slavery, paying homage to those who gave their lives for this cause, and celebrating the triumphs and resilience of those who succeeded, and

WHEREAS, Tompkins County's history includes the valor of 26 African-American residents who enlisted to fight in the Civil War between December 1863 to February 1864 at St. James AME Zion Church, Ithaca's oldest church structure and one of the nation's first AME Zion congregation, and

WHEREAS, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s – better described as a multiplicity of movements – addressed the racial segregation, discrimination, and acts of violence committed against African Americans in the United States, and ultimately sought to secure legal recognition and federal protection of the rights of citizenship for African Americans as guaranteed by the Constitution, and

WHEREAS, African Americans have profoundly influenced education in the United States by advocating for access and opportunity, promoting the inclusion of diverse histories, and upholding the right to education for all youth, and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth serves as a reminder that collective action over decades have brought measurable, though gradual and sometimes frustrating, progress toward equity, while recognizing that persistent injustices continue to affect African Americans in education, employment, socio-economic mobility, healthcare access, and public safety, and

WHEREAS, the observance of Juneteenth honors the history, perseverance, and achievements of African Americans, celebrating America's ongoing commitment to the principles of liberty and equality upon which the nation was founded, and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth is recognized as a holiday or observance in all 50 States and the District of Columbia, with the State of New York first recognizing Juneteenth in 2004, and officially became a federal holiday June 17, 2021, and

WHEREAS, the Tompkins County Legislature adopted Juneteenth as a paid holiday for all employees on April 19, 2022, to be observed on Wednesday, June 19, 2024, throughout the County, and

WHEREAS, Southside Community Center will open our local Juneteenth celebrations by hosting their annual Juneteenth Festival block party on Saturday, June 15th, and

WHEREAS, this year, Tompkins County and City of Ithaca leaders in collaboration with Southside Community Center, Community Foundation of Tompkins County, and Business Leaders of Colors have developed a day of programming on Wednesday, June 19th, celebrating with the theme Freedom then, Freedom now. The planned activities will focus on the history of Juneteenth by acknowledging the past and honoring our future through presentations, exploration of Black-owned businesses, and a community meal, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Tompkins County Legislature proclaims, recognizes, and designates June 19th, 2024, as

JUNETEENTH

and further honors and celebrates throughout Tompkins County the rich history of African Americans who fought, died, strived, and thrived in the pursuit of freedom.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I, Dan Klein, have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the great seal of Tompkins County, State of New York, on this 4th day of June 2024.

Dan Klein, Chair
Tompkins County Legislature