



*Commonwealth of Virginia*  
*Office of the Governor*

## *Executive Order*

**NUMBER SIXTY-SIX (2020)**

### **ESTABLISHMENT OF JUNETEENTH AS A STATE HOLIDAY**

#### **Importance of the Issue**

Since 1619, when both representative democracy and enslaved Africans arrived in Virginia, we have struggled to live up to our proclaimed ideals of freedom and justice for all. We have failed time and again to guarantee to all Americans the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We have said one thing but consistently done another.

The year 2020 has cast fear, violence, and tragedy upon our nation and our Commonwealth. We have persevered through a world-wide pandemic, wept over the senseless loss of lives, and lifted voices in protest while confronting the elusiveness of justice.

This Friday, June 19, 2020, “Juneteenth” as it is also known, marks the anniversary of the day in 1865 when news of the Emancipation Proclamation reached Texas, the last of the former Confederate states to abolish slavery. This was a pivotal moment in American history when all enslaved black people finally learned they were free people. It was a moment of celebration and joy. It was a moment when America finally took a step closer to its promise of freedom, equality, and justice for all.

But we know that there is much more to be done, and many, many more steps to be taken.

On Juneteenth's past, we have acknowledged the date with written proclamations, most often shared with smaller community groups. These proclamations, while important, do not do enough. We must amplify the message. It must be heard by all who call Virginia home. The commemoration of Juneteenth is a reminder that liberty and justice must never again be reserved for the few.

It will be on this day going forward that we mark a holiday of education, reflection, and celebration. On this day, we will educate ourselves on our history—all of our history. We will reflect on how our nation and our Commonwealth failed to recognize the humanity of all people,

and we will celebrate the end of enslavement and redouble our efforts to rid our society of its shameful legacy of racism, discrimination, and inequity.

I encourage all Virginians to think about the significance of this day. It was significant in 1865 because it marked the end of human bondage for African Americans in the United States. But our recognition of Juneteenth now signifies that we understand its importance to all Americans. Juneteenth is not African American history. It is *American* history. It is as woven into the fabric of our great country as is the celebration of independence on July 4<sup>th</sup>. And it should be so celebrated.

### **Directive**

Therefore, by the authority vested in me as Governor under Article V of the Constitution of Virginia and under the laws of the Commonwealth, including but not limited to §§ 2.2-103, 2.2-3300, and 2.2-3322 of the *Code of Virginia*, I hereby declare June 19 (Juneteenth) a permanent state holiday for all executive branch agencies and institutions of higher education. I further direct the Secretary of Administration in conjunction with the Department of Human Resource Management to oversee the administration of this policy.

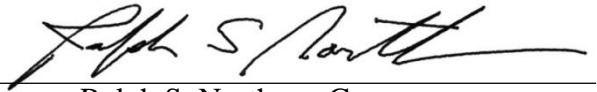
It is my hope that Juneteenth will subsequently be celebrated by the public and private sectors as well as localities all across the Commonwealth.

**Effective Date of the Executive Order**

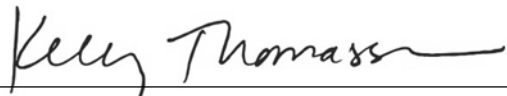
This Executive Order shall remain in full force and effect until amended or rescinded by further executive order.

Given under my hand and under the Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia on this 17<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2020.



  
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Ralph S. Northam, Governor

Attest:

  
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Kelly Thomasson, Secretary of the Commonwealth