MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE REGULAR SESSION 2021

By: Representative Clark

To: Rules

HOUSE BILL NO. 252

AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 3-3-7, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO DESIGNATE JUNE 19 AS "JUNETEENTH FREEDOM DAY"; TO SPECIFICALLY PROVIDE THAT JUNETEENTH FREEDOM DAY SHALL NOT BE A LEGAL HOLIDAY, BUT SHALL BE A DAY TO COMMEMORATE FREEDOM FROM SLAVERY AT NO EXPENSE TO THE STATE; TO PROVIDE WHEN A LEGAL HOLIDAY WILL BE CELEBRATED IF THE HOLIDAY FALLS ON A SATURDAY OR SUNDAY; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

WHEREAS, the date of June 19 is known as "Juneteenth," and it is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the commemoration of June 19 as Juneteenth specifically refers to the fact that, even though President Lincoln announced the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, the joyous news of freedom from slavery did not reach certain Americans in Galveston, Texas, until June 19, 1865; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth commemorates freedom from slavery in America, emphasizes education and achievement and is a day for reflection and rejoicing in the African-American experience; and

WHEREAS, the celebration of Juneteenth is inclusive of all races, ethnicities, religions and nationalities, and citizens

across our country may join hands in acknowledging a period in our history that has influenced our society, a great society that advances the ideals of liberty and justice for all; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

SECTION 1. Section 3-3-7, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

3-3-7. (1) Except as otherwise provided in subsection (2) of this section, the following are declared to be legal holidays, *** * ***:

(a) The first day of January, designated as New Year's Day;

(b) The third Monday of January, designated as both Robert E. Lee's birthday and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday;

(c) The third Monday of February, designated as George Washington's birthday;

(d) The last Monday of April, designated as Confederate Memorial Day;

(e) The last Monday of May, designated as National Memorial Day and Jefferson Davis' birthday;

(f) The fourth day of July, designated as Independence Day;

(g) The first Monday of September, designated as Labor Day;

(h) The eleventh day of November, designated as Armistice or Veterans' Day;

(i) The day fixed by proclamation by the Governor of Mississippi as a day of Thanksgiving, which shall be fixed to correspond to the date proclaimed by the President of the United States, designated as Thanksgiving Day; and

(j) The twenty-fifth day of December, designated as Christmas Day.

*** * *** If any legal holiday *** * *** falls on a Saturday or Sunday, then the next following *** * *** Monday, or another day declared by proclamation of the Governor as the day to celebrate the holiday, shall be a legal holiday.

(2) In lieu of any one (1) legal holiday provided for in subsection (1) of this section, with the exception of the third Monday in January, designated as both Robert E. Lee's and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, and the eleventh day of November, designated as Armistice or Veterans' Day, the governing authorities of any municipality or county may declare, by order spread upon its minutes, Mardi Gras Day or any one (1) other day during the year, to be a legal holiday.

(3) August 16 is declared to be Elvis Aaron Presley Day in recognition and appreciation of Elvis Aaron Presley's many contributions, international recognition and the rich legacy left to us by Elvis Aaron Presley. This day shall be a day of recognition and observation and shall not be recognized as a legal holiday.

(4) May 8 is declared to be Hernando de Soto Day in recognition, observation and commemoration of Hernando de Soto, who led the first and most imposing expedition ever made by Europeans into the wilds of North America and the State of Mississippi, and in further recognition of the Spanish explorer's 187-day journey from the Tombigbee River basin on our state's eastern boundary, westward to the place of discovery of the Mississippi River on May 8, 1541. This day shall be a day of commemoration, recognition and observation of Hernando de Soto and European exploration and shall not be recognized as a legal holiday.

(5) June 19 is declared to be Juneteenth Freedom Day in recognition and commemoration of June 19, 1865, as the date former slaves of African descent received communication that slavery had ended in America, and as a day when the ideals of liberty and justice for all citizens is celebrated. This day shall be a day of commemoration, recognition and observation and shall not be recognized as a legal holiday.

(* * *6) Armistice Day or Veterans' Day shall be observed by appropriate exercises in all the public schools in the State of Mississippi. The superintendent of schools of each public school district is authorized to provide for the appearance of uniformed military personnel, uniformed veterans or the families of fallen military personnel/veterans at such public school exercises in honor of Armistice or Veterans' Day. The superintendent of

schools is also authorized to permit the school band and its director(s) at any public school in the district to perform at Armistice or Veterans' Day exercises in the school district upon the request of public officials or veterans associations without loss of any program credit by participating students and without loss of leave by participating school personnel.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2021.