



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

File #: 24-3023, **Version:** 1

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

COOK COUNTY JUNETEENTH AFRICAN AMERICAN VETERAN RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Congress designating June 19, 2020, as “Juneteenth Independence Day” in recognition of June 19, 1865, the date on which news of the end of slavery reached the slaves in the Southwestern States; and

WHEREAS, news of the end of slavery did not reach the frontier areas of the United States, in particular the State of Texas and the other Southwestern States, until months after the conclusion of the Civil War, more than two and a half years after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863; and

WHEREAS, on June 19, 1865, African American Union soldiers, led by Major General Gordon Granger, arrived in Galveston, Texas, with news that the Civil War had ended and the enslaved were free; and

WHEREAS, there has been no war fought by or within the United States in which Blacks did not participate, including the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, the War of 1812, the Spanish American War, World Wars I and II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom; and

WHEREAS, the County of Cook has always honored the immeasurable wartime and peacetime contributions and sacrifice of the men and women of the United States Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, the 8th Illinois Infantry, one of the first all-black units fought under the French. During WWI roughly 27,041 served in the 33rd Division, (according to the Adjutant General’s journal) and had 738 killed in action and 5,871 were wounded. The 33rd Division is credited with 9 medals of honor; and

WHEREAS, the Black heroes and heroines of World War II and the Korean War, such as Private Sarah Keys and Women's Army Corps (WAC) officer Dovey Roundtree, won significant victories against discrimination in interstate transportation in landmark civil rights cases; and

WHEREAS, in 1948, President Harry Truman desegregated the U.S. armed forces by executive order and the Korean War allowed Black Americans to serve in every branch and sector, and in all combat areas and major operations. In 1950 there were 100,000 Black troops across the U.S. armed forces; by the end, that number was 600,000 and more than 5,000 gave their lives to stop the invasion of South Korea by communist forces; and

WHEREAS, more than 300,000 Black Americans served in Vietnam. Though only about 12% of the U.S. population, Black service members were 16.3% of the armed forces, and up to 25% of enlisted men in the Army, but only 2% of officers across all branches. The proportional increase of Black servicemembers in combat roles was a shift from earlier conflicts. Because of this over-representation, the casualty rate for Black troops was disproportionately higher; and

WHEREAS, in the Gulf War, Black troops were nearly 25% of all American forces, and for the Army, closer to 30%; and

WHEREAS, Black veterans of the Nation’s wars sowed the seeds for today's bountiful harvest through the Niagara Movement, the NAACP, the latter-day Civil Rights Movement, all of which share a common ancestry in the Civil War, without which there would be no Civil Rights Movement and no equal rights for all Americans; and

WHEREAS, today, Black veterans suffer at a disproportionate rate from chronic illnesses and homelessness and are plagued by health disparities; and

WHEREAS, the difficult challenges Black veterans faced when returning home after serving in the Armed Forces, their heroic military sacrifices, and their patriotism in fighting for equal rights and for the dignity of a people and a Nation; and

WHEREAS, today, there are an estimated 2.15 million Black military veterans nationwide. Though the percentage of service-age African Americans in the U.S. population is between 12 and 13%, they make up 21% of the Army, 17% of the Marine Corps, 10% of the Air Force and Navy, and 5.8% of the Coast Guard.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the President and the Cook County Board of Commissioners do hereby recognize June 19, 2024, as Juneteenth and ask that on this day of honor, all citizens express their gratitude to the African American Veterans men and women, and their families that have courageously served this country from the inception of America to this day.