
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 296 Session of
2023

INTRODUCED BY RABB, BULLOCK, KINSEY, SANCHEZ, MADDEN, BELLMON,
CEPEDA-FREYTIZ, SAPPEY, KHAN, HILL-EVANS, DELLOSO, N. NELSON
AND OTTEN, MARCH 10, 2023

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, MARCH 10, 2023

AN ACT

1 Designating the first Monday in February each year as
2 Emancipation Day in this Commonwealth.

3 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
4 hereby enacts as follows:

5 Section 1. Short title.

6 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Emancipation
7 Day Act.

8 Section 2. Legislative findings.

9 The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

10 (1) The Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the
11 United States, which abolished slavery, passed the United
12 States Senate on April 8, 1864, and the United States House
13 of Representatives on January 31, 1865.

14 (2) President Abraham Lincoln approved a joint
15 resolution of Congress which was submitted to the state
16 legislatures for ratification, a process which requires an
17 affirmative vote from three-fourths of the states in order to

1 amend the Constitution.

2 (3) Pennsylvania was one of the first states to approve
3 the measure as the General Assembly voted in support of
4 ratifying the Thirteenth Amendment and forever prohibiting
5 slavery within the United States on February 3, 1865.

6 (4) Pennsylvania's role as a leader in the abolishment
7 of slavery following the State's enactment of the Gradual
8 Abolition Act of 1780 helped contribute to the success of the
9 adoption of the Thirteenth Amendment.

10 (5) On the condition of ratifying the amendment to be
11 readmitted to the Union, Alabama became the 27th state to
12 ratify the Thirteenth Amendment on December 2, 1865, giving
13 the amendment the required approval of a three-fourths
14 majority of states to effectively abolish slavery in the
15 United States.

16 (6) The adoption of the Thirteenth Amendment found a
17 final constitutional solution to the issue of slavery and, in
18 tandem with the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, greatly
19 expanded civil rights for Black Americans.

20 (7) The Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments,
21 which abolished slavery, guaranteed equal protection under
22 the law and granted the right to vote, are known as the
23 Reconstruction Amendments.

24 (8) Following the passage of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth
25 and Fifteenth Amendments, many Black men and women had a
26 newfound freedom that they celebrated and valued.

27 (9) Numerous Black individuals actively took up the
28 rights and opportunities of citizenship and held elected
29 government offices, including United States Senators and
30 Representatives.

1 Section 3. Designation.

2 The first Monday in February each year is designated as
3 Emancipation Day in this Commonwealth.

4 Section 4. Construction.

5 Nothing in this act shall be construed as requiring an
6 employer to treat the first Monday in February as a legal or
7 official holiday or to provide paid leave to an employee on the
8 first Monday in February solely by virtue of the date being
9 designated under this act.

10 Section 5. Effective date.

11 This act shall take effect immediately.