

SUBJECT: Texas Emancipation Juneteenth Cultural and Historical Commission

COMMITTEE: State Affairs — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 13 ayes — Wolens, Turner, Alvarado, Brimer, Carter, Counts, Danburg,
Hilbert, Hunter, Longoria, McCall, Ramsay, Stiles

0 nays

2 absent — Craddick, D. Jones

WITNESSES: None

BACKGROUND : Juneteenth commemorates the anniversary of the arrival of the Emancipation Proclamation in Texas on June 19, 1865. President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation belatedly freed approximately 250,000 slaves in Texas. In 1979, the 66th Legislature declared Juneteenth a state holiday.

DIGEST: HB 1216 would create a six-member Texas Emancipation Juneteenth Cultural and Historical Commission. The purpose of the commission would be to coordinate state and local activities relating to the cultural and historical celebration of Juneteenth, establish a Juneteenth memorial monument, and encourage the organization of appropriate Juneteenth activities.

The commission would include six public members, appointed by the governor with the consent of the Senate and five ex-officio members: two senators appointed by the lieutenant governor, two representatives appointed by the speaker, and the executive director of the Texas Historical Commission. The members of the commission would be subject to standard conflict of interest and removal procedures.

Members would serve six-year terms, and in making his initial appointments the governor would designate staggered terms. The members would elect one of its members to be the presiding officer. Members would be entitled to travel expenses in performance of their duties. The commission would be required to submit an annual report of its accounting for the year.

The commission would be allowed to accept donations, gifts, grants, property or matching funds on behalf of the state in order to perform its duties. An Emancipation Juneteenth Cultural and Historical Commission Account would be established as an account of the general revenue fund. All money collected by the commission would be deposited in the fund.

The commission would be subject to the Sunset Act and would be abolished September 1, 2001, unless continued.

HB 1216 would take effect on September 1, 1997.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

Juneteenth is an important historical event in Texas history that should be recognized. While it has become a state holiday, there is no central location or state agency responsible for collecting information about Juneteenth, promoting Juneteenth activities, or collecting donations to build a Juneteenth monument. Very few historical records concerning Juneteenth or subsequent celebrations exist because there has been no central agency attempting to collect this information. By establishing the Texas Emancipation Juneteenth Cultural and Historical Commission, the Legislature would be giving this celebration the recognition it deserves and allowing a record of this celebration to be prepared and preserved for future generations.

The commission could also expand its mission to cover other issues related to Juneteenth, such as information about slavery and emancipation, history that would be important for all Texans, especially those of African descent.

As proposed by HB 1216, the commission would be entirely funded by donations; there would be no appropriation of state funds to the commission unless authorized in the general appropriations bill. The fiscal note assumes that private contributions, donations and grants raised by the commission would be sufficient to cover the costs of implementing the bill. The commission would be reviewed by the Sunset Commission only a few years after its creation and would be abolished in 2001 unless the Legislature chooses to continue it.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

If the commission is unable to raise sufficient funds from donations to fund its operations, the state could become responsible for such financial responsibilities.

The duties of this commission could be assumed by other existing commissions and agencies rather than creating another appointed state commission.