LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION memorializing Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim June 19, 2013, as Juneteenth Day in New York State

WHEREAS, Juneteenth is the oldest-known celebration of the ending of slavery; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to memorialize Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim June 19, 2013, as Juneteenth Day in New York State; and

WHEREAS, This year marks the 148th Anniversary of celebrating Juneteenth which began on June 19, 1865, the date Union soldiers under the command of Major General George Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, with the news that the Civil War had ended and that all slaves were free; and

WHEREAS, One of General Granger's first orders was Order No. 3 which was read aloud to the people of Texas and which stated: "The people of Texas are informed that in accordance with a Proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equity of rights and rights of property between masters and former slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and free laborer."; and

WHEREAS, Many of the newly-freed slaves stayed in their locations to learn about the new employer/employee relationship between themselves and their former masters, while others chose to reach family members in other states, and still others chose to move to the Northern states; and

WHEREAS, Settling into new areas as free men and women brought on new realities and challenges of establishing a heretofore non-existent status for Black people in America; and

WHEREAS, The celebration of Juneteenth allowed freed slaves and their descendants to recount the memories of that great day in 1865 when freedom was proclaimed, and also served as a release from the pressures of settling into new territories; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth has been known by a variety of names, including "Jun-Jun," "Freedom Day," "Emancipation Day" and "Emancipation Celebration," but regardless of what the day is called, it is a day to celebrate freedom; and

WHEREAS, A wide range of activities became traditional at Juneteenth celebrations, including barbecuing, baseball, rodeos, fishing and drinking strawberry soda; and

WHEREAS, While Juneteenth is a time for celebration, it is also a time for reflection, education and self-improvement; celebration participants listen to elders recount the past, attend prayer services, and learn from educational speakers; and

WHEREAS, In some instances, Juneteenth participants were not permitted to use public parks to hold the celebrations; activities sometimes took place on church grounds or in rural areas until more African Americans owned land and donated it for the festivities; one such park is Booker T. Washington Park in Mexia, Texas; and

WHEREAS, In 1980, the State of Texas was the first state to recognize Juneteenth as an official state holiday, through the efforts of Al Edwards, an African American State Legislator; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to proclaim June 19, 2013, as Juneteenth Day in New York State; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor of the State of New York.