HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 49

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE WASHINGTON JUNETEENTH 2001 A NATIONAL HOLIDAY OBSERVANCE AND NATIONAL JUNETEENTH HOLIDAY CAMPAIGN.

WHEREAS, more than 130 years old, Juneteenth National Freedom Day is the oldest and only African-American holiday observance in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth National Freedom Day commemorates the strong survival, due to God given strength and determination, of African-Americans who were first brought to this country stacked in the bottom of slave ships in a month-long journey across the Atlantic Ocean known as the "Middle Passage"; and

WHEREAS, approximately eleven and one-half million African-Americans survived the voyage to the New World, the number that died is likely greater, only to be subjected to whipping, castration, branding, rape, tearing apart of families and forced to submit to slavery for more than 200 years after arrival in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth commemorates the day freedom was proclaimed to all slaves in the south by Union General Granger, on June 19, 1865, in Galveston, Texas, more than two and a half years after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation by President Abraham Lincoln; and

WHEREAS, for the first time in over 130 years of the annual celebration, Juneteenth has finally been officially recognized as Juneteenth Independence Day in America by the President and Congress of the United States; and
WHEREAS, this reality is particularly underscored by the fact that it was in the 1st Session of the 105th Congress via bipartisan cooperation of the former Congresswoman Barbara Rose-Collins (D-Michigan), former Senator Carol Mosley-Braun (D-Illinois), Congressman J.C. Watts (R-Oklahoma), former House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Georgia), Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Mississippi) and Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-South Dakota), that Senate Joint Resolution 11 and House Joint Resolution 56 were successfully shepherded through both Houses of Congress, in a successful effort to officially recognize Juneteenth as the Independence Day Observance of Americans of African descent in 1997; and

WHEREAS, Americans of all colors, creeds, cultures, religions and countries of origin, share in a common love of and respect for freedom, as well as a determination to protect their right to freedom through democratic institutions, by which the "tenets-of-freedom" are guaranteed and protected; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth Independence Day, along with the 4th of July, completes the cycle of freedom for America's Independence Day observances; and

WHEREAS, "Until all are Free, None are Free," is an oft repeated maxim that can be used to highlight the significance of the end of the era of slavery in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the National Juneteenth Observance Foundation is sponsoring the premier celebration and worship services to commemorate America's 2nd Independence Day Observance, the 19th of June, as one which completes the cycle of America's 18th century Independence Movement, initiated with the 4th of July, 1776 Declaration of Independence; and

WHEREAS, to recognize this country's movement towards a one America, advanced by a sincere dialogue of the realization of what Juneteenth historically means to all Americans, promoting racial healing, restoration and justice: