

Rep. Hebl: Statement on Juneteenth

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(Sun Prairie) – Today is Juneteenth, the anniversary of the emancipation of the last remaining slaves in Texas and the former Confederacy on June 19th 1865. Rep. Gary Hebl (D-Sun Prairie) released the following statement:

Given the events currently taking place across America, it is especially important to educate ourselves on the history of Black America. Too often it is overlooked when recounting the history of our country, but it is just as important when trying to understand how America has gotten to where we are now. Black history is American history, and Juneteenth is obviously a huge part of that.

We are often taught that President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation freed all of the slaves in the rebelling states. However, in practice, slavery continued for more than two years after that proclamation, and only truly ended on June 19, 1865, when a Union general in Galveston, Texas, read a federal order declaring all slaves in the state of Texas to be free.

Today we celebrate the day the last of the slaves were freed, starting Black America on a long road to securing equal footing in the United States, a quest that continues to this very day. There is a lot of work that we have left to do to address issues that disproportionately affect black Americans, such as infant mortality rates, child poverty rates, lack of quality education, and unequal treatment in the American criminal justice system. We have to do better for our fellow Americans.

Assembly Democrats have called on Governor Evers to convene a special session to address some of these systemic issues. If he does, I hope that the Republicans that control the Legislature will allow any bills to see the light of day.

Despite this uncertainty, it is obvious that there are numerous issues that we must discuss to address systemic discrimination in our country. We must do so as soon as

possible.