

WPS Health Solutions: Juneteenth holiday to be honored

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MADISON, Wis.—May 12, 2022—Yesterday, WPS Health Solutions notified its employees the company will honor Juneteenth as a federal holiday beginning this June. The holiday is celebrated on June 19 each year. Since June 19 lands on a Sunday in 2022, the paid holiday for WPS employees will be observed on Monday, June 20.

Moira Klos, the company's Chief People Officer, said, "All WPS employees will get the day off to recognize the importance of this historic moment in our nation's history. It's a day the country remembers and teaches about the institution of slavery, its end, and the racism and violence that continued afterward through to the present."

On June 17, 2021, President Joe Biden signed legislation making Juneteenth a federal holiday. The Senate and House passed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act later that same week. With almost no time to respond in 2021, WPS was not able to provide a time-off holiday last year; however, WPS acknowledged the importance of the occasion and joins the nation in celebrating Juneteenth with a time-off holiday this year.

President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on Jan. 1, 1863. And although the Emancipation Proclamation did not immediately end slavery, it did fundamentally transform the character of the Civil War. The federal government also announced the acceptance of Black men into the Union Army and Navy, enabling the liberated to become liberators. By the end of the war, nearly 200,000 Black soldiers and sailors had fought for the Union and freedom.

According to the National Archives, it took until 1865 for the news of the

Emancipation to finally reach the nearly 250,000 slaves living in Galveston, Texas.

“They were the last to hear the good news,” Klos said. “That day, June 19, is the day we celebrate to honor the struggles of Black Americans in their fight for freedom—a day they took to the streets to declare their freedom and celebrate. Now, WPS joins them!”