

# METROPOLITAN WATER RECLAMATION DISTRICT of GREATER CHICAGO RESOLUTION

SPONSORED *by the* BOARD of COMMISSIONERS RECOGNIZING

## JUNE 19<sup>th</sup> *as* JUNETEENTH *and* HONORING JESSE C. WHITE JR.

**WHEREAS**, Juneteenth or June 19th, is an annual celebration which commemorates the anniversary of the date that slaves in Galveston, Texas were informed that they were free. Also known as Emancipation Day, Juneteenth is the oldest known observation of the emancipation of slaves in the United States; and

**WHEREAS**, during the Civil War, as many Confederate states were defeated by the Union Army, many slave owners from Louisiana, Mississippi, and other southern states moved with their slaves to Texas due to its relative isolation and lack of monitoring by the Union Army. Thus, by the end of the Civil War, the number of slaves in Texas had grown immensely; and

**WHEREAS**, while General Robert E. Lee of the Confederate Army surrendered on April 9, 1865, marking the official end of the Civil War, news regarding the capitulation traveled slowly to isolated areas of the South. Texas was the last state in the Confederacy to receive notice that the Civil War was over and that the Confederate's efforts to withdraw from the Union had failed; and

**WHEREAS**, on June 19, 1865, Union soldier Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas and announced the end of the Civil War. In reading "General Orders No. 3" he announced "The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free"; and

**WHEREAS**, the announcement officially gave effect to the Emancipation Proclamation, which had been issued by President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863. While the Emancipation Proclamation ended slavery in states that had seceded from the Union, slavery as an institution in the United States did not end until the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment on December 6, 1865; and

**WHEREAS**, the first recognition of Juneteenth can be traced back to Galveston, Texas as early as 1866. As former slaves moved north from Texas in search of a better life, they took with them the history of June 19th. As such, Juneteenth festivals became widespread throughout African American communities in the United States; and

**WHEREAS**, on January 1, 1980, due to the efforts of State Representative Al Edwards of Houston, Texas became the first state to proclaim Juneteenth a holiday. On June 17, 2021, President Joseph R. Biden signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act, which designated Juneteenth as a federal holiday; and

**WHEREAS**, on August 6, 2020, in acknowledgement of the significance of Juneteenth, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation of District of Greater Chicago Board of Commissioners was one of the first government agencies in the State of Illinois to authorize that Juneteenth be offered as a holiday for all employees; and

**WHEREAS**, Juneteenth is a day of considerable emotions. It symbolizes the promise of



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freedom, new beginnings, truth, optimism, endurance against injustice, and the fight for equality. Juneteenth is not just a day of celebration for African Americans, but for all Americans; and

**WHEREAS**, the District is honored to have Jesse C. White Jr., Illinois Secretary of State, participate in its first Juneteenth celebration. First elected to office on November 3, 1998, he is the 37th person to serve as Secretary of State in Illinois. He is also the longest serving Illinois Secretary of State and the first African American to serve in that role; and

**WHEREAS**, Illinois Secretary of State White was born in Alton, Illinois in 1934. He earned his Bachelor of Science degree in 1957 from Alabama State College (now Alabama State University); and

**WHEREAS**, he served in the United States' Army 101st Airborne Division as a paratrooper, in addition to serving in the Army Reserves, and in the Illinois National Guard. Illinois Secretary of State White also played baseball with the Chicago Cubs organization for numerous years and was employed as an educator and administrator in the Chicago Public School system for thirty-three years; and

**WHEREAS**, in 1959, Illinois Secretary of State White founded the internationally recognized Jesse White Tumblers (Tumblers) to provide an outlet for children from low-income families. With a focus on molding students into successful and productive members of society, every participant is required to abstain from consumption of drugs and alcohol, to

refrain from participating in gang activity, and maintain a minimum C average in school. Throughout the years, the Tumblers have performed in numerous locations including: Belize, Bermuda, Canada, Cayman Islands, China, Croatia, Hong Kong, Israel, Japan, and Zagreb; and

**WHEREAS**, in 1974, Illinois Secretary of State White was elected to the Illinois House of Representatives, where he served for sixteen years. During his tenure, he was the Chairman of the Illinois House Committee on Human Services and was an energetic member of the Education Committee; and

**WHEREAS**, in 1992, Illinois Secretary of State White was elected as the Recorder of Deeds for Cook County, the nation's second largest Recorder's Office, a post to which he was re-elected in 1996; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the Board of Commissioners of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, on behalf of ourselves and our staff, do hereby recognize June 19th as Juneteenth and honor Illinois Secretary of State Jesse C. White Jr.; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that this resolution be spread upon the permanent Record of Proceedings of the Board of Commissioners of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago and that a copy of same, suitably engrossed, be presented to Illinois Secretary of State Jesse C. White Jr.



DATED THIS 16<sup>th</sup> DAY of JUNE, 2022.

## BOARD of COMMISSIONERS

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