

The Columbus Dispatch

Franklin County commissioners designate paid Juneteenth holiday to replace Columbus Day

By Marc Kovac

The Columbus Dispatch

Posted Jun 30, 2020 at 11:38 AM

Updated Jun 30, 2020 at 1:58 PM

Bipartisan legislation introduced in the Ohio Senate on Monday would add Juneteenth to the list of paid government holidays, though that bill would not remove Columbus Day from the calendar.

The Franklin County commissioners have officially eliminated Columbus Day as a paid holiday for agencies under their control, replacing it with Juneteenth, a commemoration of the end of slavery in the United States.

The resolution, adopted by the panel during their regular weekly business meeting Tuesday morning, took effect immediately, swapping out Columbus Day this year for a paid holiday the day after Thanksgiving, since Juneteenth (June 19) has already passed.

“It’s the fair and right thing to do,” said Commissioner Kevin Boyce. “This is probably one of the most demonstrative actions that we’ve taken, to remove one holiday that history didn’t quite tell the full story (about) ... and replace it with another in the same way that is much more inclusive and very important in the time we’re in.”

Get the news delivered to your inbox: [Sign up for our politics newsletter](#)

Juneteenth marks the day in 1865 that Union soldiers announced to enslaved Black Americans in Galveston, Texas, that they were free. The Emancipation Proclamation had been in effect for more than two years by then.

Other communities across Ohio and the country are considering comparable moves. Bipartisan legislation introduced in the Ohio Senate on Monday would add Juneteenth to the list of paid government holidays, though that bill would not remove Columbus Day from the calendar.

“Adding Juneteenth as a holiday gives us an opportunity to really do the education of the history that many of us, most of us, have missed out on getting,” said Commissioner Marilyn Brown.

In other business, the commissioners continued to earmark funds for teen jobs and camps this summer, ensuring young people have access to career development and other activities despite the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

The total includes nearly \$869,000 for “Ready 2 Earn,” providing 300 14- and 15-year-olds with a six-week work readiness program that includes training and up to \$1,000 in stipends and incentive payments for those involved.

Additionally, nearly \$1.8 million was approved Tuesday for 17 summer camp providers, with another seven set for future approval, to provide in-person or virtual activities for more than 1,600 youngsters.

“With the epidemic and all of the learning that has been lost because we could not have school, this is a tremendous opportunity for our young people to be able to continue learning this summer and also to earn money,” said Stephanie Hightower, president and chief executive officer of the Columbus Urban League, which administers some of the programming.

Christie Angel, president and chief executive officer of YWCA Columbus, one of the camp providers, said her nonprofit would offer eight weeks of programming for children staying in the YWCA's family shelter.

The camps will serve about 25 youngsters at a time, with masks required when in groups indoors.

"For these kids in particular, who have other things going on in their lives, this is so important," Brown said.

mkovac@dispatch.com

[@OhioCapitalBlog](#)