

Whereas, Juneteenth, or Juneteenth Independence Day, commemorates the traditional observance of the end of slavery in the United States and is observed annually on June 19; and,

Whereas, President Abraham Lincoln declared on April 6, 1859 “This is a world of compensations; and he who would *be* no slave, must consent to *have* no slave. Those who deny freedom to others, deserve it not for themselves; and, under a just God, cannot long retain it”; and,

Whereas, on January 1, 1863, President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring that “all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free”; and,

Whereas, President Lincoln correctly believed slavery to be in violation of the principles of the Declaration of Independence and that its abolition represented a “new birth of freedom” for the United States; and,

Whereas, two years after the Emancipation Proclamation, Gen. Gordon Granger of the U.S. Army proclaimed the end of bondage in Texas on June 19, 1865 at Galveston, and over the summer of 1865 word spread to the Unassigned Lands of Indian Territory; and,

Whereas; the following year, the first official Juneteenth celebrations took place in Texas and have continued across the United States throughout the years; and,

Whereas; in 1866, treaties provided for the abolition of slavery and the extension of citizenship, including land rights, to the freed slaves; and,

Whereas; Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “If the cruelties of slavery could not stop us, the opposition we now face will surely fail. Because the goal of America is freedom; abused and scorned tho’ we may be, our destiny is tied up with America’s destiny”; and,

Whereas; Juneteenth is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery; and,

Whereas; on June 19, 2021, Juneteenth will be celebrated in Stillwater at Southern Woods Park from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.; and,

Whereas; Juneteenth is a celebration of freedom and an opportunity to honor the principles of the Declaration of Independence and to celebrate the achievements of contributions African Americans have made and continue to make in Stillwater and the State of Oklahoma;

Now, therefore, I, William H. Joyce, Mayor of the City of Stillwater, on behalf of the City Council and citizens, encourage and extend an invitation for everyone to celebrate June 19, 2021 as Juneteenth Day.