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Juneteenth is Wednesday but N.J.'s state holiday is Friday. Here's why.

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By

- [Jelani Gibson | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com](#)

New Jersey is celebrating Juneteenth for the third time this year, but once again, it will differ from the federal holiday.

The holiday is named for the moment Union troops arrived in the Confederate state of Texas to announce the end of slavery. When the Union won the war, the order demanding that all slavery come to an end was not followed by the Confederate states until Union troops actually got into their territory. Texas was considered the westernmost Confederate state at the time.

The federal holiday comes on the day that happened: June 19, which is Wednesday. That means federal offices will be closed, there won't be any mail delivery and many businesses will take the day off.

However, New Jersey will be open for business on Wednesday because the Garden State will commemorate Juneteenth — closing all state offices and courts — on Friday.

The reason? New Jersey officials recognized the date as a holiday before the federal government did.

The holiday had long been recognized in the south and within communities of color. In the wake of 2020 protests over police accountability, there was renewed attention and calls for it to be enshrined as an official holiday.

When New Jersey officials passed the state holiday, leaders decided that it would happen on the third Friday of June every year to make sure the holiday consistently fell into a weekend.

The law was pushed by former State Senate President Stephen Sweeney and Gov. [Phil Murphy](#) signed it into law September 2020.

Newark mayor and gubernatorial candidate Ras Baraka declared the day as one that would include [ceremonies and teach-ins](#) for municipal employees in June 2020.

President Joe Biden then signed the bill passed by Congress into law in 2021, making it a federal holiday.

Even though the federal holiday on a different day, New Jersey officials said they felt no need to change the state holiday.

This year, Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris gave remarks at a Juneteenth concert that took place on the White House lawn June 10.

Also, Murphy has signaled [he plans](#) to debut a clemency program on Juneteenth.

The previous new federal holiday that [was created](#) was Martin Luther King Jr. Day in 1983.

[Jelani Gibson](#) is a cannabis and politics reporter for [NJ.com](#). He

can be reached at jgibson@njadvancemedia.com. Follow him on X [@jelanigibson1](#) and on [LinkedIn](#).

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