

# Levy Court adds “Juneteenth” to County Holidays

Juneteenth (June 19) is now an official Kent County holiday under an amendment to the Personnel ordinance adopted by Levy Court Commissioners on November 23, 2021.

The change is consistent with recent action taken by the State of Delaware General Assembly to make “Juneteenth National Freedom Day” a State holiday and by the U.S. Congress to make “Juneteenth National Independence Day” a federal holiday. Kent County previously observed Juneteenth as a “special holiday” by declaration of the President of Levy Court in 2020 and 2021.



In his declaration of the 2021 “Juneteenth Day of Observance,” U.S. President Biden said in part,

*“On June 19, 1865 — nearly nine decades after our Nation’s founding, and more than 2 years after President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation — enslaved Americans in Galveston, Texas, finally received word that they were free from bondage. As those who were formerly enslaved were recognized for the first time as citizens, Black Americans came to commemorate Juneteenth with celebrations across the country, building new lives and a new tradition that we honor today. In its celebration of freedom, Juneteenth is a day that should be recognized by all Americans. And that is why I am proud to have consecrated Juneteenth as our newest national holiday.*

*Juneteenth is a day of profound weight and power.*

*A day in which we remember the moral stain and terrible toll of slavery on our country – what I’ve long called America’s original sin. A long legacy of systemic racism, inequality, and inhumanity.*

*But it is a day that also reminds us of our incredible capacity to heal, hope, and emerge from our darkest moments with purpose and resolve....*

*On Juneteenth, we recommit ourselves to the work of equity, equality, and justice. And, we celebrate the centuries of struggle, courage, and hope that have brought us to this time of progress and possibility. That work has been led throughout our history by abolitionists and educators, civil rights advocates and lawyers, courageous activists and trade unionists, public officials, and everyday Americans who have helped make real the ideals of our founding documents for all...”*

*...Juneteenth marks both the long, hard night of slavery and discrimination, and the promise of a brighter morning to come... Together, we will lay the roots of real and lasting justice, so that we can become the extraordinary country that was promised to all Americans.”*

*Juneteenth not only commemorates the past. It calls us to action today...”*

The new holiday only applies to unrepresented employees since unionized employees have negotiated specific Holidays and how/when each is observed. In addition to adding the holiday to the existing 12 (plus Election Day in even numbered years), the ordinance amendment makes several revisions to how holidays are observed. Essential employees (24 hours/7 days per week) working on a Saturday or Sunday when News Years Day, Juneteenth, Independence Day, Veterans Day, or Christmas Day fall on the weekend will accrue vacation in an amount equal to the hours physically worked on the specific date. Holiday pay would still be earned on the date the holiday is officially observed (typically a Friday or Monday).

This change to the Holiday Pay procedure requires affected 24/7 staff to request annually in writing on a calendar year basis (before January 1, 2022 then annually thereafter) accrual of 8-hours of vacation in lieu of payment of Holiday pay (8-hours). Since only a maximum of 240 vacation hours may be accrued by such hourly staff, employees must accurately estimate vacation use and make sure that they are not at or near the maximum accrual, since no vacation hours can accrue after 240 hours and no change can be made to the vacation vs. Holiday Pay selection until the following year. Keep in mind that any hours worked on certain holidays also automatically accrue to vacation.

As usual for non-represented employees, holidays falling on a Saturday are observed the previous Friday and those falling on Sunday are observed on Monday. The amendment provides that the County Administrator shall annually set the Holiday calendar. However, whenever “Christmas Day” (December 25) or the “Day After Christmas” (December 26) holiday fall on the weekend, the President of Levy Court determines when the Day After Christmas holiday is actually observed.

For more information contact the Personnel Office or visit the Employee Portal and look under the Personnel Policies tab.

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