



HR0232

LRB103 31750 LAW 60335 r

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of Representatives wish to recognize the national historic importance and legacy of Nance Legins-Costley and William Costley; and

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WHEREAS, For Juneteenth this year, Tazewell County will be dedicating a new memorial in Downtown Pekin to honor Nance Legins-Costley and William Costley, a mother and son who were both born into slavery and recognized throughout the world as the first enslaved individuals emancipated by then attorney Abraham Lincoln in 1841; and

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WHEREAS, While born into slavery in 1813, Nance Legins-Costley firmly asserted her claim to freedom by age 14, beginning what would be 14 years of legal challenges to her enslaved status; and

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WHEREAS, Nance Legins-Costley finally gained freedom for herself and her children, as their legal status was a direct reflection of their mother's, when Abraham Lincoln presented her case before the Illinois Supreme Court in the famous Bailey vs. Cromwell case in 1841; and

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WHEREAS, Nance Legins-Costley married Benjamin Costley in

1 1840; together, they raised five daughters and three sons,
2 living in Pekin for over 50 years; and

3 WHEREAS, Nance Legins-Costley became the first and only
4 enslaved individual to own property in Pekin in 1849; and

5 WHEREAS, William Costley, Nance Legins-Costley's oldest
6 son, answered President Abraham Lincoln's call to defend the
7 Union during the American Civil War by volunteering for the
8 Union Army in 1864, joining the famed 29th U.S. Colored
9 Infantry; and

10 WHEREAS, William Costley's military service included
11 participating in the Siege of Petersburg, where he was injured
12 in battle, and the Appomattox Campaign in Virginia in 1865;
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14 WHEREAS, William Costley was transferred with the 29th
15 U.S. Colored Infantry to Galveston, Texas, where he assisted
16 General Gordon Granger in enforcing the Emancipation
17 Proclamation, liberating the last stronghold of slavery in the
18 United States on June 19, 1865; and

19 WHEREAS, This enforcement of the Emancipation Proclamation
20 in Galveston, Texas on June 19, 1865 is celebrated and
21 observed today as the holiday Juneteenth in the State of

1 Illinois and by the federal government; and

2 WHEREAS, The new memorial in Downtown Pekin and a new
3 memorial in the Southside of Peoria are the only permanent
4 indicators of Nance Legins-Costley's life, and the new
5 memorial in Downtown Pekin will be the only permanent
6 indicator of William Costley's life in the State of Illinois;
7 and

8 WHEREAS, The new memorial has been recognized by the
9 Illinois Historical Society with official Illinois Historical
10 Markers, providing further testimony to the national historic
11 impact of the lives of Nance Legins-Costley and William
12 Costley; and

13 WHEREAS, The new memorial to preserve the legacy of Nance
14 Legins-Costley and William Costley's lives was made possible
15 by the efforts of Tazewell County Clerk John C. Ackerman, the
16 City of Pekin, the Pekin Chamber of Commerce, the Pekin Main
17 Street Organization, the Dirksen Congressional Center, the
18 Pekin Library, the Tazewell County Genealogical & Historical
19 Society, the YWCA Coalition for Equality, and Pekin Historian
20 Jared Olar; therefore, be it

21 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
22 HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that

1 we recognize the national historic importance and legacy of
2 Nance Legins-Costley and William Costley; and be it further

3 RESOLVED, That we urge the citizens of the State of
4 Illinois to celebrate the new memorial honoring Nance
5 Legins-Costley and William Costley in Downtown Pekin and learn
6 more about the impact these fellow citizens of Illinois had on
7 the history of the United States; and be it further

8 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
9 presented to Tazewell County Clerk John C. Ackerman, the City
10 of Pekin, the Pekin Chamber of Commerce, the Pekin Main Street
11 Organization, the Dirksen Congressional Center, the Pekin
12 Library, the Tazewell County Genealogical & Historical
13 Society, the YWCA Coalition for Equality, and Pekin Historian
14 Jared Olar as an expression of our esteem and respect.