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CARDIN, HASTINGS CELEBRATE 144TH ANNIVERSARY OF JUNETEENTH

Congress Votes for Formal Apology for Slavery and Racial Segregation

WASHINGTON-- **Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD)**, Chairman of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (U.S. Helsinki Commission) and Co-Chairman **Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-FL)** issued the following statements today marking the occasion of Juneteenth.

“This day in 1865, slaves in Galveston, Texas, learned what President Lincoln had proclaimed two years prior – they were free. With the Civil War over and the issuance of an order from General Gordon Granger, slavery ended – an occasion all Americans celebrate with pride today,” **Chairman Cardin** said. “African Americans have been an integral part of America’s growth and progress as a nation. Juneteenth this year comes with yet another overdue proclamation. The U.S. Congress this week, in a historic vote, supported the call for an apology for slavery and segregation, giving this Juneteenth occasion even more significance.”

“This year, we add to this celebration of freedom the formal apology from the United States Congress for slavery and the years of Jim Crow laws that plagued our nation,” **Co-Chairman Hastings** said. “This apology is an important symbol of growth and healing, however it must be followed with substantive actions to address enduring disparities as well as intolerance.”

“While we celebrate our great accomplishments in the fight for equal rights, we also must look ahead and continue the work of those who have gone before us. We only need to look at the failing school systems, impoverished living environments, and high unemployment rates disproportionately impacting people of color to realize that our work is not yet done,” **Hastings said.**

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The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the U.S. Helsinki Commission, is an independent agency of the Federal Government charged with monitoring compliance with the Helsinki Accords and advancing comprehensive security through promotion of human rights, democracy, and economic, environmental and military cooperation in 56 countries. The Commission consists of nine members from the U.S. Senate, nine from the House of Representatives, and one member each from the Departments of State, Defense, and Commerce.

