



Kevin P. Tucker  
Commander-in-Chief  
Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War

58 Forest Street  
Wakefield, MA 01880  
[cinc@suvcw.org](mailto:cinc@suvcw.org)



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**JUNETEENTH 2026**

Brothers of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War,

As our nation commemorates this year's Juneteenth holiday, I encourage every Brother of our Order to reflect upon the profound connection between this historic observance and the legacy we have pledged to preserve.

On June 19, 1865, Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, and announced that all enslaved people were free. Although President Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation more than two years earlier, the final enforcement of freedom in Texas marked the culmination of a struggle that had cost our nation dearly and claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of Americans.

Juneteenth is rightly celebrated as a day of liberation, hope, and renewal. It is also a reminder that freedom was secured through sacrifice.

The veterans whose memory we honor were part of a generation that transformed the Civil War from a war for Union into a war for Union and Freedom.

Many enlisted to preserve the Republic. Yet through four years of hardship, service, and sacrifice, they became agents of a greater cause. They helped ensure that the nation would emerge from its greatest crisis not only reunited, but more closely aligned with the principles of liberty and equality expressed in our Declaration of Independence.

The freedom proclaimed in Galveston was made possible by victories won on battlefields across the nation. It was secured by the courage of Union soldiers, sailors, and Marines, including nearly 180,000 African American soldiers who served in the United States Colored Troops and another 20,000 Black sailors who helped carry the Union cause to victory. Their service demonstrated both the power of patriotism and the universal desire for freedom that has always been at the heart of the American experience.

As Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, we are the inheritors of that legacy.

Our mission is not merely to preserve monuments, records, and gravesites, important though those efforts are. We are also called to preserve the memory of what the Union victory accomplished and why it matters today.

The men of the Grand Army of the Republic understood that the Union was more than a collection of states. It was a promise—a promise that liberty, self-government, and equal opportunity could endure and expand for future generations.

Juneteenth stands as one of the greatest fulfillments of that promise.

As we remember this important day, let us honor all those whose sacrifices made it possible. Let us remember the formerly enslaved Americans who persevered in hope through generations of bondage. Let us remember the African American soldiers who fought for a freedom they themselves had often been denied. Let us remember the Union veterans whose courage preserved the Republic and helped destroy slavery.

Most importantly, let us recommit ourselves to ensuring that their stories are never forgotten.

The work of remembrance is more than an act of historical preservation. It is an act of citizenship. By teaching the history of the Civil War and its enduring consequences, we help future generations understand both the cost of freedom and the responsibilities that accompany it.

As we observe Juneteenth, may we draw inspiration from the generation whose legacy we are privileged to preserve. May we continue their work of strengthening the bonds of Union, promoting understanding of our nation's history, and honoring the principles for which they fought.

In Fraternity, Charity, and Loyalty,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin P. Tucker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Kevin P. Tucker

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