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## JUNETEENTH

# Black businesses seeking solidarity beyond holiday

Consistent support is necessary for economic growth, advocates say

By TYLER J. DAVIS  
Staff Writer  
tyler.davis@dallasnews.com

2 Sisters Sweet Creations is good every day.

Or so they hear.

The sisters have concocted confections for a local megachurch, the offices of Chevy and

Home Depot and anyone else who may wander into their DeSoto bakery. People are especially interested in the sisters' sweets around Black holidays.

But those corporations that patronized the bakery during Black History Month, and ahead of Juneteenth, have yet to become regular customers despite consistent compliments. Corporate feedback has been nothing but positive, and nearly 100 Google reviews average out to a sterling

4.8 stars.

"We're good enough to do business with you when it's Juneteenth, but what about just on an everyday basis?" said Yolanda Bledsoe, who runs 2 Sisters with her sibling, Deidra Keener. "We're somebody you want to do business with in, so-to-speak, that off time, when it's not popular to do business with Black people."

The sisters are grateful for all

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## Holiday events

Juneteenth commemorates June 19, 1865, the day news of the emancipation of enslaved people arrived in Texas. This year's celebrations and commemorations include parades, music, festivals and Opal Lee's Walk for Freedom. Find more at [dallasnews.com/topic/juneteenth](https://dallasnews.com/topic/juneteenth)

**Also:** Thousands line up to catch a glimpse of the rarely exhibited Emancipation Proclamation and General Order No. 3 at the National Archives. **4A**

## IMPEACHMENT

# Paxton trial sees costs emerge

How much taxpayers will foot for attorney fees, senator stipends to hinge on proceedings' duration

By LAUREN MCGAUGHY  
and ALLIE MORRIS  
Austin Bureau

AUSTIN — The cost of the high-stakes impeachment trial for Attorney General Ken Paxton is largely a question mark and will depend on the length of proceedings.

Lawyers hired by House impeachment managers to argue that Paxton should be removed from office will make \$500 an hour, plus travel costs, according to public documents obtained by *The Dallas Morning News*.

The state's senators, who will sit as jurors, will receive daily stipends. And while Paxton's lead defense lawyer said he won't be paid with public funds, he has not said how the team will be paid, including six staffers who took a leave of absence from the attorney general's office to join their boss's legal team.

A trial in the Senate must begin by Aug. 28 in the state's first impeachment in nearly half a century. On Tuesday the chamber is expected to announce the rules, the possible duration and a firmer start date.

The senators will ultimately make the final decision on whether Paxton can stay on as the state's attorney general. He's currently suspended from the job without pay.

Paxton, a third-term Republican with close ties to former President Donald Trump, is accused of taking bribes and abusing his office to help a campaign donor, among other alleged

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Stewart F. House/Special Contributor

# Cooks whip up food for dads

Patrons filled the African American Museum in Fair Park for the 23rd annual Father's Day Sunday Dinner presented by City Men Cook on Sunday in Dallas.

The event, labeled "the largest Sunday dinner in North Texas," included a friendly Father's Day cook-off, music, dancing and a presentation on the history of Juneteenth.

# Party is 'celebration of freedom for all'

Former freedmen's town Deep Ellum goes large with its tribute to holiday

By SONIA RAO  
Staff Writer  
sonia.rao@dallasnews.com

James and Toni Fidel were out Sunday morning in Deep Ellum for Father's Day when they heard loud music on Main Street. They walked toward it, and found a block party celebrating Juneteenth, which became a federal holiday in 2021.

The Deep Ellum Foundation held the Juneteenth On Main Block Party, which featured music artists like Jess Garland, Dezi 5, Cure for Paranoia and Dru Hill, local Black-owned business vendors and a Black history/art exhibit. It was hosted by Real Housewives of Atlanta's Kenya Moore and Dallas-born Lady Jade. This was the first time Deep Ellum has celebrated Juneteenth on such a scale, said Will Haggins IV, the Deep Ellum Foundation's events and programs manager.

Haggins said he did not know about Juneteenth — which marks the anniversary of the day the last



Stewart F. House/Special Contributor

slaves in the U.S. learned in Galveston that they were free — until he moved to Texas from Michigan three years ago. He came up with the idea of a block party because such gatherings are so integral to many in the Black community.

"I was like, let's do the same thing in the neighborhood of Deep Ellum," he said.

The Fidels grew up celebrating Juneteenth in their hometowns of

Austin and Oklahoma City, and said they are always happy to find events spreading the meaning and history of the holiday.

James Fidel said having this event in Deep Ellum was important because of its history as a town where formerly enslaved people settled in the late 1800s, and its history as a music hub that has helped develop Black blues artists such as Lead Belly, Blind Lemon

Jefferson and Robert Johnson.

Music performances at the block party included gospel, rhythm and blues, hip-hop and alternative. Haggins said he wanted to celebrate different genres of local Black music.

For Dezi 5, a singer/songwriter/DJ who grew up in Deep Ellum, performing at Sunday's event was

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## HIGHLAND PARK ISD

# New chief to live in \$1.8M home for free

Board president: Perk is in line with long-standing district practice

By MITCHELL PARTON  
Staff Writer  
mitchell.parton@dallasnews.com

Leading the school system of one of the most affluent communities in Texas has its perks, one of which is living rent-free in a multimillion-dollar home bought by the district.

Highland Park Independent School District has acquired a home in University Park for its new superintendent, Mike Rockwood, to live in, according to district and county records. School board President Maryjane Bonfield said the district paid about \$1.8 million for the home, which the Dallas Central Appraisal District lists with a market value of \$1.76 million.

"Within the Highland Park ISD real estate market, the home is a very modest, moderately priced, well-priced home that was a financially prudent investment to accomplish the purposes of the board and the long-standing practices of Highland Park ISD, which is to have our superintendent live in our community," Bonfield said.

The Highland Park ISD board of trustees approved the home purchase Feb. 7, according to meeting minutes. The district's employment contract with Rockwood — which expires June 30, 2026, if not extended — allows him to live in the home during his term.

"I wouldn't say it's free," Bonfield said. "He's

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Mostly sunny and hot



Metro, back page

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## NATION & WORLD

### No deals, but talks continue

The United States and China agreed to continue talks with a possible official Chinese visit to the U.S., officials said. **2A**

## METRO

### Unusual honor for legends

Country music legends Willie Nelson and Jerry Jeff Walker have two new species of grasshoppers named after them. **1B**

## SPORTSDAY

### A big comeback for Rangers

The bullpen put on a masterclass in giving their team a chance, as the Rangers came from six runs down to beat Toronto. **Shawn McFarland, 1C**



# More than a holiday: pushing for progress

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business they get — they're preparing sweets for a division of employees at the Dallas Cowboys' headquarters this week — and the bump in sales around the holidays. But there's a question of consistency outside of those times of year.

## Genuine support

That's not an issue for Friendship-West Baptist Church, where the sisters worship. The church in Dallas' Red Bird area orders more often, and in larger quantities, than Fortune 500 companies that usually only call once or twice a year.

On the third year Juneteenth is celebrated as a federal holiday, many Black business owners and advocates are still trying to gauge the authenticity and efficacy of corporate support of Black entrepreneurship that peaked in the months after George Floyd's May 2020 death.

## 'Economic liberation'

The dynamic the women face in Dallas' southern suburb is just one example of the disconnect between symbolic, spoken support of the Black community and tangible support. Year-round patronage of Black businesses and Black access to capital are just two aspects of needed "economic liberation," described by Ken Harris of the National Business League.

There's no better time, in his mind, to talk about these issues than Juneteenth, when Black liberation is under a lens. The league is one of the nation's oldest and oldest Black trade associations and support systems.

"There's a direct tie-in in terms of self-reliance, self-independence from an economic standpoint, and that's exactly what we're doing," Harris said. "This is a tremendous time and we're taking our ancestors with us and we're going to be looking to use Juneteenth as a solution and tool and an inspiration towards the full entrepreneurial, enterprise liberation and empowerment of black business."

## Commercialization

Juneteenth has gone from a somewhat niche celebration for Black Americans, especially Black Texans descendant from enslaved people, to a holiday recognized by banks and the government — and big retailers.

Two years ago, President Joe Biden designated Juneteenth a federal holiday, in part because of the longtime advocacy of Fort Worth native Opal Lee, prompting a rush of Juneteenth-related products by entities who previously showed little interest in the holiday.

When Juneteenth ice cream and Juneteenth shirts bearing white models were produced by corporations, Black academics and historians decried



Tom Fox/Staff Photographer

**Sisters Deidra Keener (center) and Yolanda Bledsoe (right) visit with Rachel Redmon at their DeSoto bakery. People are especially interested in the sisters' sweets around Black holidays. But corporations that patronized their business during Black History Month and ahead of Juneteenth have yet to become regular customers despite consistent compliments.**

the commodification of what is an emotional holiday for Black Americans.

But to some Texans, the "commodification" of the holiday was overstated. After all, using times meant for deep reflection — Thanksgiving, Christmas, Veterans Day — to sell discounted merchandise is American as the Fourth of July itself.

"In the '50s, and early '60s, department stores here, which had segregated water fountains and restrooms, advertised full-page ads in the newspaper with Juneteenth sales," said Bob Ray Sanders, spokesperson for the Fort Worth Metropolitan Black Chamber of Commerce. "... And it wasn't seen so much as commercialization. It was seen as all holidays now are."

Sanders said it's up to Black people to make sure the day isn't "defiled" by being associated with *just* sales and parties. The history and the "why" are vital, especially as some discussions about Black history are being curtailed in classrooms, he said.

Harrison Blair, president of the Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce, had similar sentiments. He doesn't see an issue with the making of Juneteenth gear and signage.

"I prefer to buy them from a Black vendor because I want to give my dollars to where I know they're going to support people who support the communities that we live, work and play in," he said. If Juneteenth is "being commodified by the people whose culture it is, then that's fine. You know, everybody feels a little bit more comfortable when you walk into a rib shack and you see that rib shack is being smoked out by somebody that may look like



Shafkat Anowar/Staff Photographer

**Juneteenth flags** were set up during a ceremony at Dallas City Hall on Friday. Bob Ray Sanders, with the Fort Worth Metropolitan Black Chamber of Commerce, said it's up to Black people to make sure the day isn't "defiled" by being associated with just sales and parties.

your uncle."

Annette Gordon-Reed, a native Texan and Harvard University professor who has written books about Juneteenth, said in an email there's a guide to how to properly mesh business with the holiday: Just look at Black Texans.

"There have been a couple of unfortunate attempts at commercialization that have been called out. But it's inevitable that this will happen to some degree," she wrote. "I'm hoping, however, we will be able to keep the meaning of the holiday alive despite that. I think the advantage we have is that Black Texans have been celebrating this since 1865, and we have created a template for how to do it."

## Making plans

The Dallas and Fort Worth chambers and the National Business League have plans to increase access to Black capital and to improve Black neighborhoods and communities that do not end when Juneteenth does. The historical context of the holiday is useful to this end.

The NBL has a strategy to help digitize thousands of

Black businesses in the next five years, helping level the playing field while tech and social media grow as key economic factors. The group also has a plan to make Black-owned businesses the largest employers of Black workers.

"We [as Black people] missed the agricultural movement, because we were picking cotton, and we couldn't participate," Harris said. "We missed the industrial revolution because we were Jim Crow-ed out of it and segregated to only operate within our local communities. ... But then when we got successful at forming our own Black Wall Streets ... we were met with severe oppression and almost terroristic activities and policies to destroy those economic centers."

"And so here we are, again, almost 70 years after the Civil Rights Movement seeking our economic plight."

To fix these issues locally, Sanders was on a mayoral task and force designed to identify gaps in Black/white education and opportunity in Fort Worth and set plans to address them.

"We decided that every one of those issues came back to economics," Sanders said. "... You can't really talk about free-

dom without talking about economic freedom and responsibilities and opportunities."

Progress is happening, slow as it may be. Sanders is cautiously optimistic that city leadership is committed to reversing decades of disinvestment.

Sanders said the Fort Worth chamber has helped Black contractors secure projects for the school district, the city, a hospital and DFW International Airport. Government contracts, particularly at the federal level, have historically been elusive for Black entrepreneurs.

Blair said an executive with Goldman Sachs approached him about allowing Black vendors to sell directly to the investment firm's employees.

"[He said] we're not going to sell any kind of flavored ice cream for Juneteenth but ... we're going to invite small businesses to come in and interact with our large employee base" Blair recalled. "And we're going to have a little fair for them to go and put up tables and sell their wares or their services directly to our employees."

The 2023 Juneteenth Golf

Classic, held at Black-owned Dallas Golf Club, is another holiday event centered on economic advancement in the area.

JCPenney and Target are two large companies that have seemingly held true to their promises to work with Black businesses. But Harris said some Black-focused programs have been opened to include all minority business, thereby dimming the focus on African American entrepreneurs.

"So we got a major fight, a major struggle, we just got to use Juneteenth to realize that we are not economically free," he said. "We need to use Juneteenth to know that that serving as a Black economic underclass is not acceptable."

## Consistency

Gordon-Reed said Juneteenth can be a useful reminder about buying Black.

"I hope that it's helpful in that regard," she said. "There's absolutely nothing wrong with supporting Black businesses. In fact, it is imperative. And if the day reminds us of the solidarity we need to have within our community, that is all to the good."

Nearly 40% of Black Americans under the age of 40 report buying regularly from Black-owned businesses, but that number drops heavily among other ethnic and age groups.

Keener and Bledsoe have seen an increase in day-to-day sales since Black History Month, and they have dozens of repeat customers, yet the consistency isn't there yet to build the wealth other white-owned confection companies have seen.

But they are making enough to hire at least one other employee, and there are everyday positives that keep the pair going.

One man traveled four-plus hours from Victoria to buy sweets from 2 Sisters Sweet Creations. Like many older Black customers who come by, he was beaming with pride as he showed his copy of the February *Dallas Morning News* that included an interview with the sisters about their Black History Month activity.

They hope for a day where that exposure isn't such a surprise and large-scale support isn't siloed to one late-spring weekend or the calendar's shortest month. No big business, outside of Friendship-West Baptist Church, has ordered more than once from 2 Sisters, or ordered outside of a Black holiday, though these companies usually tell the women how excited they are to work with a Black-owned business.

"It's almost like, 'OK, it's a cool thing to do. It's Juneteenth so because that's a Black holiday, we need to find somebody Black,'" Keener said. "... But however you found us [for Juneteenth], that vehicle worked three weeks ago, or it'll work three months from now."

Twitter: @TDavisDMN

## HOLIDAYS

# Woman's response to Mother's Day spawns Father's Day

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — You could call her the mother of Father's Day.

The late Sonora Smart Dodd launched the celebration of dads in 1910 in her hometown of Spokane, Wash. As a result, she is the one responsible for those annual gifts that run the gamut from embarrassingly silly neckties to kids' finger paintings crafted with so much love by those tiny hands that they can bring a tear to the eye of even the most stoic father.

It's a tradition Dodd decided to start as she sat in a Spokane church on Mother's Day 1909, listening to a sermon about — what else? — Mother's Day.

"And it bugged her," Dodd's great-

granddaughter, Betsy Roddy, told The Associated Press in 2017. "She thought, 'Well, why isn't there a Father's Day?'"

Dodd and her five younger brothers, after all, had been raised by their father after their mother died in childbirth in 1898.

## Her inspiration

William Jackson Smart, a farmer, not only held down both parental roles but did it with "leadership and love," his daughter always said, and she believed he ought to get some credit.

"So she worked tirelessly with the local clergy and got the YWCA on board, and they had their first Fa-

ther's Day in Spokane in 1910," said Roddy, displaying a copy of *The River Press* of Fort Benton, Mont., which reported on the event.

Although that story predicted the celebration would go nationwide by the next year, Father's Day was slow to catch on. So much so that Dodd spent the next 62 years lobbying everyone from presidents to retailers for support.

Finally, in 1972, President Richard Nixon declared the third Sunday of June a federal holiday honoring dads. Dodd, who died at age 96 in 1978, had lived to see her dream come true.

A Renaissance woman, the Mother of Father's Day was a painter, poet and businesswoman, run-

ning a funeral home with her husband while raising the couple's only son, a future father named Jack.

"I take a great deal of pride in that renegade spirit that she clearly had," Roddy said.

## Last in the line

The only child of an only child and widowed after 24 years of marriage, Roddy never had children of her own.

That not only leaves her with the title of Great-Granddaughter of Father's Day but also assures she is the last direct descendant of the holiday's creator.

As a child, Roddy said, she loved her great-grandmother deeply, visit-

ed her every year and treasures the poems, books and notes she gave her, including one welcoming her to the world on the year she was born. She still keeps it, in pristine condition, in a small box in her home.

Still, as a child, Roddy says, she took Father's Day largely for granted, concluding the elaborate celebration, including the special card for her great-grandmother, was just something her family did. Even as an adult, she's generally kept quiet about being the ultimate Father's Day insider, leaving it to her mother to spread the word.

But no more. "I'm the last direct descendant. The legacy is here, which is an honor," she said.