

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2013 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 42 (Senator Montgomery, *et al.*)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Health and Government Operations

State Government - Commemorative Days - Maryland Emancipation Day

This bill requires the Governor to annually proclaim November 1 as Maryland Emancipation Day in recognition of the emancipation of the slaves in the State.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Commemorating Maryland Emancipation Day does not affect State finances.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Nine official commemorative days and three months are recognized in State law as shown in **Exhibit 1**. The Governor also must issue a proclamation each year encouraging citizens and other individuals to observe a moment of silence at 3 p.m. on Memorial Day to unite in remembrance and commemorate the heroic acts and efforts of Marylanders who have served and died in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Background: On November 1, 1864, Maryland adopted a new constitution that abolished slavery, making it the first state with slaves to voluntarily free its slaves by popular vote. Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 had only freed slaves in rebel states, of which Maryland was not one.

Since 1867, the small town of Trappe, located in Talbot County, has hosted an Emancipation Day celebration known as “Uncle Nace’s Day” in honor of Nathaniel Hopkins (~1831-1900), who founded the celebration. Nathaniel Hopkins – known to his friends and family as “Uncle Nace” – was born into slavery, served in the Union Army during the Civil War, and was a community leader. For the first 30 years, Hopkins himself led the parade, dressed in his full Union Army uniform. After his death, the citizens of Trappe decided to continue the tradition of the Emancipation Day festivities, although they are now held on the second Saturday in October.

In 2012, Montgomery County Parks hosted a weekend of events to celebrate Emancipation Day, including a night hike on the Underground Railroad Experience Trail.

Exhibit 1
Official Commemorative Days and Months in Maryland

Asian Lunar New Year Day ¹	January/February
Black History Month	February
Women’s History Month	March
Crime Victims and Advocates Day	April 3
John Hanson’s Birthday ²	April 13
Negro Baseball League Day ³	May
Law Day	May 1
Fire, Rescue, and Emergency Services Workers Day ⁴	June
Maryland Charter Day	June 20
Hispanic Heritage Month ⁵	September/October
Poetry Day	October 15
Annapolis Charter Day	December 17

¹Day designated as new year on the Asian lunar calendar.

²John Hanson served as the first president of the Continental Congress under the Articles of Confederation from 1781 to 1782.

³Commemorated on the second Saturday in May.

⁴Commemorated on the first Sunday in June.

⁵Commemorated from September 15 to October 15.

Source: Department of Legislative Services

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 167 (Delegate Ivey, *et al.*) – Health and Government Operations.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Arts Council, Montgomery County Department of Parks, Town of Trappe, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 21, 2013
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