

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2014 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 762 (Delegate A. Miller, *et al.*)
Health and Government Operations

State Government - Commemorative Days - Diwali Day

This bill requires the Governor to annually proclaim the first Saturday in November as Diwali Day in recognition of the economic and cultural contributions of the many Marylanders for whom Diwali holds special significance. The proclamation must urge educational and cultural organizations to observe Diwali Day properly with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Commemorating Diwali Day does not affect State finances.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Eleven official commemorative days and five 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: Diwali, also known as the “festival of lights,” is a Hindu festival celebrated in autumn every year. The specifics of the festival vary by region, but it generally signifies the victory of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, good over evil, and hope over despair. Over the centuries, in India, Diwali has become a national festival that is enjoyed by most Indians regardless of faith.

The festival preparations and rituals typically extend over a five-day period, but the main festival night of Diwali coincides with the darkest, new moon night of the Hindu Lunisolar month Kartik. In the Gregorian calendar, Diwali night falls between mid-October and mid-November.

Traditionally families, neighbors, and close friends celebrate Diwali together with lights, fireworks, gifts, and good food. There are generally specific activities associated with each day of the festival.

Exhibit 1
Official Commemorative Days and Months in Maryland

Asian Lunar New Year Day ¹	January/February
Black History Month	February
Irish American Heritage Month	March
Women’s History Month	March
Crime Victim and Advocate Day	April 3
John Hanson’s Birthday ²	April 13
Maryland Centenarians Day ³	May
Negro Baseball League Day ⁴	May
Law Day	May 1
Fire, Rescue, and Emergency Services Workers Day ⁵	June
Maryland Charter Day	June 20
Hispanic Heritage Month ⁶	September/October
German-American Heritage Month	October
Poetry Day	October 15
Maryland Emancipation Day	November 1
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 Thursday in May.

⁴Commemorated on the second Saturday in May.

⁵Commemorated on the first Sunday in June.

⁶Commemorated from September 15 to October 15.

Source: Department of Legislative Services

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): BBC, National Geographic Kids, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 14, 2014
ncs/hlb

Analysis by: Caroline L. Boice

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510