

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2018 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**First Reader**

House Bill 121 (Delegate Knotts)  
Health and Government Operations

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**General Provisions - Commemorative Days - Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day**

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This bill requires the Governor to annually proclaim the fourth Thursday in March as Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day in recognition of the Tuskegee Airmen's contributions to the United States in World War II and their ties to Maryland.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** Establishing Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day does not affect State finances.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:** Sixteen official commemorative days, six months, and one week are recognized in State law, as shown in **Appendix 1**. The Governor also must issue a proclamation each year encouraging citizens and other individuals to observe a moment of silence at 3:00 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:** The Tuskegee Airmen is the popular name of a group of African-American military pilots (fighter and bomber) who fought in World War II. Officially, they formed the 332nd Fighter Group and the 477th Bombardment Group of the United States Army Air Forces. The name also applies to the navigators, bombardiers, mechanics, instructors,

crew chiefs, nurses, cooks, and other support personnel for the pilots. All black military pilots who trained in the United States trained at Moton Field, the Tuskegee Army Air Field, and were educated at Tuskegee University, located near Tuskegee, Alabama. The Tuskegee Airmen overcame segregation and prejudice to become one of the most highly respected groups of World War II. Altogether, 992 pilots graduated from the Tuskegee Air Field courses, and they flew 1,578 missions and 15,533 sorties, destroyed 261 enemy aircraft, and won more than 850 medals.

In 2014, Arizona passed legislation to declare the fourth Thursday in March as Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day. The March date was selected because pivotal Tuskegee Airmen historical events occurred in the month of March: March 1941, the first Tuskegee Airmen ground crews began training; March 1941, the first flying unit, the 99th Pursuit Squadron, was activated; March 1942 when the first aviator cadets received their pilot wings; and March 2007, President George W. Bush awarded the Tuskegee Airmen the Congressional Gold Medal.

Former Tuskegee Airmen with ties to Maryland include retired Colonel Charles McGee and retired Lieutenant William Broadwater. The legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen and Col. McGee's story was highlighted at an exhibit "Fighting for the Right to Fight" at the National World War II Museum in New Orleans. Lieutenant Broadwater was invited to attend the inauguration of former President Barack Obama in honor of his service in the Tuskegee Airmen. Other veteran Tuskegee Airmen went on to found and teach at the Columbia Air Center, a civil flight school in Croom, Maryland.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Arizona; *CBS local*; *britannica.com*; *aractai.org*; *www.wikipedia.com*; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - January 17, 2018  
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Analysis by: Caroline L. Boice

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

## Appendix – Official Commemorative Days and Months in Maryland

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Asian Lunar New Year Day <sup>1</sup>	January/February
Black History Month	February
Irish-American Heritage Month	March
Women’s History Month	March
Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day	March 30
Crime Victim and Advocate Commemorative Day	April 3
John Hanson’s Birthday <sup>2</sup>	April 13
National Healthcare Decisions Day	April 16
Maryland Centenarians Day <sup>3</sup>	May
Negro Baseball League Day <sup>4</sup>	May
Law Day U.S.A.	May 1
Fire, Rescue, and Emergency Services Workers Day <sup>5</sup>	June
Chesapeake Bay Awareness Week <sup>6</sup>	June
Juneteenth National Freedom Day	June 19
Maryland Charter Day	June 20
Thurgood Marshall Day	July 2
Hispanic Heritage Month <sup>7</sup>	September/October
German-American Heritage Month	October
South Asian American Heritage Day	October 2
Poetry Day	October 15
American Indian Heritage Month	November
Maryland Emancipation Day	November 1
Annapolis Charter Day	December 17

<sup>1</sup>Day designated as new year on the Asian lunar calendar.

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

<sup>3</sup>Commemorated on the second Thursday in May.

<sup>4</sup>Commemorated on the second Saturday in May.

<sup>5</sup>Commemorated on the first Sunday in June.

<sup>6</sup>Commemorated during the second week in June.

<sup>7</sup>Commemorated from September 15 to October 15.

Source: Department of Legislative Services