

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2007 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
Revised

Senate Bill 240

(Senator Exum, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Health and Government Operations

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**State Government - Commemorative Month - Black History Month**

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This bill requires the Governor to proclaim the month of February as Black History Month. The proclamation must urge educational and cultural organizations to observe Black History Month properly with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** Commemorating Black History Month would not directly affect State operations.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:** Four official commemorative days and one month are recognized in State law as shown in **Exhibit 1**. In addition, the Governor 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:** Black History Month is celebrated nationwide during the month of February and became an official national observance in 1976. The idea of commemorating the achievements and contributions made by African Americans to the nation developed in 1915 when Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson founded the Association for

the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH). Through the association, Dr. Woodson began pressing for the establishment of a Black History Week as a way to bring national attention to the many accomplishments of African Americans and to neutralize the negative distortions that were promoted by many people in society at that time.

In 1926, the association established the first Black History Week which was observed during the second week of February to coincide with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. The response to this observance was overwhelming, with Black History clubs being established and school teachers requesting materials to instruct their students. To serve the needs of school teachers, ASALH began publishing photographs and portraits of important African Americans. In 1976, this observance officially became Black History Month.

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**Exhibit 1**  
**Official Commemorative Days and Months in Maryland**

Asian Lunar New Year Day <sup>1</sup>	January
John Hanson's Birthday <sup>2</sup>	April 13
Law Day	May 1
Poetry Day	October 15
Women's History Month	March

<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.

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**Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** A similar bill, HB 1428, was introduced in 2006. The House Health and Government Operations Committee took no action on the bill.

**Cross File:** HB 101 (Delegate Burns, *et al.*) – Health and Government Operations.

**Information Source(s):** Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Federal Register, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 2, 2007  
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