

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2008 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 418 (Delegate Burns, *et al.*)
Health and Government Operations

State Government - Commemorative Months - Black History Months

This bill requires the Governor to annually proclaim both January and February as Black History Months.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Commemorating January along with February as Black History Months would not directly affect State operations.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Chapter 301 of 2007 required the Governor, in recognition of the historical contributions that Black Americans have made to the State, to annually 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.

As shown in **Exhibit 1**, four official commemorative days and two months are recognized in State law. 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. 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. In 1976, this observance officially became Black History Month.

Exhibit 1
Official Commemorative Days and Months in Maryland

Asian Lunar New Year Day ¹	January
Black History Month	February
John Hanson's Birthday ²	April 13
Law Day U.S.A.	May 1
Poetry Day	October 15
Women's History Month	March

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.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 14, 2008
mcp/hlb

Analysis by: Jennifer B. Chasse

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