

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2012 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 165 (Delegate Stukes, *et al.*)  
Health and Government Operations

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State Government - Commemorative Days - Juneteenth National Freedom Day

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This bill requires the Governor to annually proclaim June 19 as Juneteenth National Freedom Day.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2012.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** Commemorating Juneteenth National Freedom Day does not affect State finances.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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Analysis

**Current Law:** Eight 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:** “Juneteenth” is the oldest holiday in the United States commemorating the end of slavery. It was on June 19, 1865, that the Union soldiers, led by Major General Gordon Granger, landed at Galveston, Texas with news that the war had ended and that

the enslaved were now free. This was two and a half years after President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, which had gone into effect January 1, 1863.

The news of freedom was met with shock and joy, and in subsequent years the now free men and women began to celebrate the day they heard of their freedom with their descendants. The celebration was particularly popular in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Arkansas, and California. Although it declined in popularity during the early twentieth century, there has recently been resurgence in interest in the holiday.

On January 1, 1980, Juneteenth became an official paid state holiday in Texas. Juneteenth is now recognized as a state holiday or state holiday observance in 38 states and the District of Columbia. Several presidents have also observed Juneteenth.

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

Asian Lunar New Year Day <sup>1</sup>	January/February
Black History Month	February
Women’s History Month	March
John Hanson’s Birthday <sup>2</sup>	April 13
Negro Baseball League Day <sup>3</sup>	May
Law Day	May 1
Fire, Rescue, and Emergency Services Workers Day <sup>4</sup>	June
Maryland Charter Day	June 20
Hispanic Heritage Month <sup>5</sup>	September/October
Poetry Day	October 15
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 Saturday in May.

<sup>4</sup>Commemorated on the first Sunday in June.

<sup>5</sup>Commemorated from September 15 to October 15.

## **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** SJ 16 of 2001, a similar bill, passed the Senate and received a hearing in the House Commerce and Government Matters Committee, but no further action was taken. SB 615 of 2000, which would have made Juneteenth a paid State holiday, received a hearing in the Senate Finance Committee, but no further action was taken.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** National Juneteenth Observance Foundation, Juneteenth.com, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - January 31, 2012  
mlm/hlb

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