

Date of Hearing: April 20, 2022

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION

Miguel Santiago, Chair

AB 1801 (Nazarian) – As Amended April 7, 2022

SUBJECT: State holidays: Genocide Awareness Day

SUMMARY: This bill would add April 24, known as “Genocide Awareness Day,” to the list of state holidays. Community colleges and public schools would have to close on April 24 under the bill. The bill would require the California State University, and request the University of California, to close campuses on April 24. The bill would require that state employees, with specified exceptions, be given time off with pay on April 24. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Provides that April 24, known as “Genocide Awareness Day” is a state holiday. Makes corresponding changes within certain exceptions, to the paid holidays to which state employees are entitled.
- 2) Requires public schools and community colleges to be closed on April 24, known as “Genocide Awareness Day”. Makes corresponding changes to the paid holidays to which school and community college employees are entitled.
- 3) Requires every campus of the California State University (CSU) to observe April 24, known as “Genocide Awareness Day,” as a holiday, and requires every campus to be closed on that day.
- 4) Requests the University of California (UC) to observe April 24, known as “Genocide Awareness Day” as a holiday and to close each of its campuses on that day.
- 5) Designates April 24, known as “Genocide Awareness Day,” as an optional bank holiday.
- 6) Makes corresponding, conforming, and technical changes.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Provides that the following are state holidays:
 - a) Every Sunday.
 - b) January 1.
 - c) The third Monday in January, known as “Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.”
 - d) February 12, known as “Lincoln Day.”
 - e) The third Monday in February, known as “Washington Day.”
 - f) March 31, known as “Cesar Chavez Day.”
 - g) The last Monday in May.
 - h) July 4.

- i) The first Monday in September.
 - j) September 9, known as “Admission Day.”
 - k) The fourth Friday in September, known as “Native American Day.”
 - l) The second Monday in October, known as “Columbus Day.”
 - m) November 11, known as “Veterans Day.”
 - n) December 25.
 - o) Good Friday from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m.
 - p) Every day appointed by the President or Governor for a public fast, thanksgiving, or holiday.
- 2) Entitles state employees, with certain exceptions, to be given time off with pay for specified holidays. Provides that the provisions of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) shall prevail where those provisions conflict with the holidays listed in state law, as specified.
- 3) Designates holidays on which community colleges and public schools are required to close. Permits the governing board of a community college district, notwithstanding those holidays, to maintain classes on any days other than January 1, July 4, December 25, and any day appointed by the President or the Governor for a public thanksgiving, when climatic conditions of the district render it necessary that the colleges be closed as early in the year as possible or opened as late in the year as possible.
- 4) Requires every campus of the CSU to observe November 11, known as Veterans Day, as a holiday, and be closed on that day, except as specified when November 11 falls on a Saturday or Sunday.
- 5) Designates optional bank holidays.
- 6) Prohibits regional centers from compensating for specified programs for providing any service to a consumer on specified holidays.

FISCAL EFFECT: This bill has been keyed fiscal by Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS:

Background.

According to information provided by the author’s office, the need for a state holiday to remember and reflect on genocides is important for two reasons. First, some genocidal acts which have been proven to have occurred are outright denied. Secondly, it is also an issue that we continue to struggle to prevent as a global community.

For instance, the Armenian Genocide was the systematic killing and deportation of Armenians by the Turks of the Ottoman Empire. During World War I, leaders of the Turkish government set in motion a plan to expel and massacre Armenians. By the early 1920s, when the massacres and

deportations ended, between 600,000 and 1.5 million Armenians were dead, with many more forcibly removed from the country. Of those who survived, most were forced to find new homes and new lives around the world, including in the United States. The widespread denial of the genocide enhances the trauma. To this day, the successor state of the Ottoman Empire, the Republic of Turkey, denies the genocide took place. Many national governments also deny its occurrence out of geopolitical considerations—namely, the consequences it would have on bilateral relations with Turkey.

In 2019, the House and Senate passed a resolution recognizing the mass killings of Armenians from 1915 to 1923 as genocide. In 2021, President Biden issued a statement marking the 106th anniversary of the massacre's start. The statement stated in part, "Each year on this day, we remember the lives of all those who died in the Ottoman-era Armenian genocide and recommit ourselves to preventing such an atrocity from ever again occurring. Today, as we mourn what was lost, let us also turn our eyes to the future—toward the world that we wish to build for our children. A world unstained by the daily evils of bigotry and intolerance, where human rights are respected, and where all people are able to pursue their lives in dignity and security. Let us renew our shared resolve to prevent future atrocities from occurring anywhere in the world. And let us pursue healing and reconciliation for all the people of the world." Currently, only thirty-one countries worldwide recognize the genocide—and, therefore, the trauma that Armenians feel today.

The author's office further notes, "Secondly, it is an issue that we continue to struggle to prevent as a global community. Despite the adoption of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in 1948, we have seen countless atrocities that have earned the genocide designation. Ranging from Africa (Rwanda, 1994) to Europe (Bosnia, 1995) to Asia (Cambodia, 1975-1979), and others. Even today we hear cries to investigate a potential genocide committed by Russia in its ongoing war in Ukraine while President Joe Biden and other key U.S. figures have begun referring to the Uighur concentration camps in China as a genocide."

Purpose of the bill. According to the author's office, "Genocide has been an unfortunate reality since the dawn of humanity, being perpetrated on every continent, by and against every race. The act of systematically erasing another group is born out of hate, prejudice, and a lack of empathy. We can only resolve these fundamental human flaws through recognition, understanding, and awareness. Reflecting on these common human flaws is the point of this bill. This bill requires that we take a day as a state to reflect on previous and current acts of genocide, and, through this reflection, we can help prevent further atrocities. Additionally, this gives many with generational trauma recognition of that trauma and an opportunity to heal."

Double referral. This bill has been double-referred to the Assembly Committee on Higher Education.

Related legislation. AB 1655 (Jones-Sawyer) of 2022. This bill would add June 19, known as "Juneteenth," to the list of state holidays. The bill would require community colleges and public schools to close on June 19. The bill would require the California State University, and request the University of California, to close campuses on June 19. The bill would require that state employees, with specified exceptions, be given time off with pay on June 19. Pending in the Assembly Committee on Higher Education.

AB 1972 (Low) of 2022. Makes the day of statewide general elections in even-numbered years a state holiday, and eliminates Washington Day (sometimes referred to as Presidents' Day) as a holiday in those years. Pending in the Assembly Governmental Organization Committee.

AB 2596 (Low) of 2022. This bill would repeal provisions requiring the Governor to annually proclaim the Lunar New Year, and would instead recognize the Lunar New Year as a state holiday. The bill would require that state employees, with specified exceptions, be given time off with pay for the Lunar New Year. Pending in the Assembly Governmental Organization Committee.

Prior legislation. The following are the most recent measures relative to the commemoration of the anniversary of the Armenian Genocide:

HR 21 (Nazarian, 2022) – adopted by Assembly
SR 29 (Archuleta, 2021) – adopted by Senate.
SR 31 (Borgeas, 2019) – adopted by Senate.
AJR 16 (Rivas, Resolution Chapter 150, Statutes of 2019).
SR 107 (Portantino, 2018) – adopted by the Senate.
AJR 37 (Friedman, Resolution Chapter 75, Statutes of 2018).
SR 29 (Portantino, 2017) – adopted by the Senate.
AJR 3 (Nazarian, Resolution Chapter 56, Statutes of 2017

AB 53 (Low) of 2021. Makes the day of statewide general elections in even-numbered years a state holiday, and eliminates Washington Day as a holiday in those years. Held on the Assembly Appropriations Committee's Suspense File.

AB 177 (Low) of 2019-2020 Legislative Session. Would have made the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November of each even-numbered year a state holiday. Held on the Assembly Appropriations Committee's Suspense File.

AB 2165 (Low) of 2018 and AB 674 (Low) of 2017 were similar to AB 177 (listed above). Held on the Assembly Appropriations Committee's Suspense File.

SB 984 (Polanco), Chapter 213, Statutes of 2000. Established a paid holiday for state employees each March 31, which would be designated as "Cesar Chavez Day."

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file

Opposition

None on file

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