

Date of Hearing: April 8, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION

Blanca Rubio, Chair

AB 2294 (Ta) – As Introduced February 19, 2026

**SUBJECT:** State holidays: Sylvia Mendez Day.

**SUMMARY:** This bill would designate Sylvia Mendez Day as a state holiday. The bill includes related legislative findings and declarations.

**EXISTING LAW:**

1) Establishes the holidays of the state as: Every Sunday; January 1; Dr. Martin Luther King; Jr. Day (the third Monday in January); Lunar New Year (date corresponding with the second new moon following the winter solstice, or the third new moon following the winter solstice should an intercalary month intervene); Lincoln Day (February 12); the third Monday in February; Farmworkers Day (March 31); Genocide Remembrance Day (April 24); Diwali (the 15th day of the month of Kartik in the Hindu calendar each year); the last Monday in May; Juneteenth (June 19); July 4; the first Monday in September, Admission Day (September 9); Native American Day (the fourth Friday in September); Columbus Day (the second Monday in October); Veterans Day (November 11); December 25; Good Friday (from 12 noon until 3 p.m.); and every day appointed by the President or Governor as a public fast, Thanksgiving, or holiday, as provided. (Section 6700, Gov. Code.)

2) Entitles state employees to the following holidays: January 1; the third Monday in January; the third Monday in February; March 31; the last Monday in May; July 4; the first Monday in September; November 11; Thanksgiving Day and day after; December 25; the day chosen by an employee as a personal holiday; and every day appointed by the Governor of this state for a public fast, thanksgiving, or holiday. (Section 19853(a), Gov. Code.)

3) Allows a state employee to elect to receive eight hours of holiday credit for the Lunar New Year, Genocide Remembrance Day, Juneteenth, or Native American Day in lieu of receiving eight hours of personal holiday credit. (Section 19853 (e), Gov. Code.)

4) Authorizes an employee in State Bargaining Unit 5, to elect to use eight hours of vacation, annual leave, or compensating time off consistent with departmental operational needs and collective bargaining agreements for the fourth Friday in September, known as “Native American Day.”

5) Adopts state holidays as judicial holidays, with certain exceptions, including Admission Day and Columbus Day.

6) Authorizes a state employee to elect to receive holiday credit to observe their religion, culture, or heritage, among other provisions, including those relating to collective bargaining. (Section 19853.2, Gov. Code.)

**FISCAL EFFECT:** This bill is keyed non-fiscal by Legislative Counsel.

**COMMENTS:**

Purpose of the bill. According to the author's office, "As the former Mayor of Westminster, I know the power of the Mendez v. Westminster case. It's important for California to celebrate the civil rights challenges faced by Mexican-Americans in this state. Furthermore, I am confident California will benefit from learning of the historical link between Mendez v. Westminster and Brown v. Board of Education, and of how California led the way as the first state to outlaw all public school segregation. This legislative session should waste no time in celebrating Sylvia Mendez's contribution to civil rights in the state's government code to ensure this trailblazing case receives its proper place in history."

### **Background.**

The landmark United States Supreme Court case *Mendez v. Westminster School District of Orange County* (S.D. Cal. 1946) 64 F.Supp. 544, aff'd *Westminster School District of Orange County v. Mendez* (9th Cir. 1947) 161 F.2d 774 (hereafter Mendez v. Westminster) was a pivotal decision in the struggle for civil rights and educational equality for Mexican American students in California.

The case arose from discriminatory practices occurring across the United States, where Mexican American children were segregated into "Mexican schools" under the guise of "separate but equal" policies.

The Mendez v. Westminster case challenged these policies, asserting that the segregation of Mexican American children violated their rights under the 14th Amendment to the United States Constitution, which guarantees equal protection under the law.

The United States District Court's ruling in Mendez v. Westminster was one of the first major legal decisions to strike down segregation in schools in the United States, paving the way for future desegregation cases, including the landmark Brown v. Board of Ed. of Topeka, Shawnee County, Kan. (1954) 347 U.S. 483 (hereafter Brown v. Board of Education).

Earl Warren, who was Governor of California at the time of the Mendez v. Westminster case, supported the legal action and the bill that led to the end of school segregation in California, and later was appointed as Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, played a key role in the writing of the Brown v. Board of Education decision, which extended the principles of Mendez v. Westminster nationwide.

California led the United States in banning school segregation, with the Mendez v. Westminster case setting a crucial precedent that resulted in the Legislature passing laws to eliminate school segregation in the state, well before the national legal landscape was transformed by Brown v. Board of Education.

The Mendez v. Westminster decision had a profound impact not only on the educational system of California but also on the civil rights movement, as it marked an early victory in the ongoing fight against racial segregation and discrimination in the United States.

Supporters state that it is important to honor and recognize the courage of the families and the contributions of the legal and civil rights advocates who fought for justice in this landmark case, which continues to inspire efforts toward equality and inclusion in education and society. April 14 marks the 78th anniversary of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth

Circuit decision in *Mendez v. Westminster*, and it is fitting to commemorate this day as a reminder of the ongoing fight for equal rights and the importance of education in fostering a just and equitable society.

Unpaid/Paid holidays. California law does not require private employers to provide paid holidays, to close their business on any holiday, or to give employees the day off for any particular holiday. When an employer chooses to close its business on a holiday and provide paid time off, that practice exists because of an employer-adopted policy or practice, the terms of a collective bargaining agreement, or the terms of an individual employment agreement. There is no legal requirement that an employer offer paid holidays or close its operations on those days.

At the local level, cities have the liberty to specify by charter, ordinance or resolution what paid holidays the city will provide to its city employees. Similarly, most state workers are bound by the memorandum of understanding that they have negotiated with the Governor. For all other state employees, they are entitled to the” holidays prescribed in the Existing Law section of this analysis.

This bill adds Sylvia Mendez Day to the list of state holidays. An additional state holiday does not equate to an additional paid day off. Public employees earn personal holidays that they may use to take any day off with pay.

In support. The California Association for Bilingual Education writes, “Honoring the legacy of Sylvia Mendez and the families who challenged school segregation reflects the values of inclusion, opportunity, and equal access to education that continue to guide California’s public education system. Recognizing Sylvia Mendez Day provides an opportunity for students and educators to reflect on this important chapter of California’s history and the ongoing work to ensure equal educational opportunity for all. For multilingual learners and students from diverse cultural backgrounds, learning about the contributions of communities who fought for educational justice can foster greater understanding, belonging, and civic engagement.”

Related legislation. AB 1841 (Ramos) of 2026. This bill would entitle all state employees to a holiday on the fourth Friday in September, known as “Native American Day,” in lieu of that day as an elective holiday under existing law, upon determination by the California Department of Human Resources that sufficient funds exist to provide the holiday for all state employees. The bill authorizes any state bargaining unit to negotiate to receive this day as a paid holiday as part of their memorandum of understanding. (Assembly Committee on Appropriations)

AB 2017 (Haney) of 2026. This bill proposes to add the first day of the month of Shawwal in the Islamic lunar calendar, known as “Eid al-Fitr,” and the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Dhu al-Hijjah in the Islamic lunar calendar, known as “Eid al-Adha” to the existing list of state holidays by authorizing state employees to elect to take time off with pay for this day; authorizes community colleges and public schools to close on these days, and, adds these days to the list of holidays excluded from designation as a judicial holiday. (Assembly Committee on Governmental Organization)

AB 2156 (Rivas), Chapter 7, Statutes of 2026. Designated March 31 as Farmworkers Day and requires the Governor to annually proclaim March 31 as Farmworkers Day.

AB 2455 (Haney) of 2026. This bill would require the Governor to annually proclaim May 17 as Bruce Lee Day, would designate and set apart that date each year as having special significance, and would encourage all public schools and educational institutions to observe that date by conducting exercises remembering the life of Bruce Lee and recognizing his accomplishments and the contributions he made to the state. (Assembly Committee on Governmental Organization)

Prior legislation. AB 268 (Kalra), Chapter 358, Statutes of 2025. Added Diwali to the list of state holidays, authorizes public schools and community colleges to close on Diwali, and authorizes state employees to elect to take specified leave in recognition of Diwali.

AB 989 (Ramos) of 2025. This bill would have removed the “fourth Friday in September, known as Native American Day” as an elective holiday for state employees and, instead, make it a paid state holiday for those employees. (Assembly Appropriations Committee’s – Held on Suspense File)

AB 2156 (Rivas and Limón), Chapter 7, Statutes of 2026. Designated March 31 as Farmworkers Day and required the Governor to annually proclaim March 31 as Farmworkers Day.

SB 461 (Wahab), Chapter 398, Statutes of 2023. Authorized a state employee to choose to receive eight hours of holiday credit specifically for observance of a holiday or ceremony of the state employee’s religion, culture, or heritage in lieu of receiving eight hours of personal holiday credit.

AB 1655 (Jones-Sawyer), Chapter 753, Statutes of 2022. Added June 19, known as "Juneteenth," to the list of state holidays, requires public schools, as specified, to close on June 19, and authorizes specified state employees to elect to take time off with pay in recognition of Juneteenth, as specified.

AB1801 (Nazarian), Chapter 761, Statutes of 2022. Added April 24, known as "Genocide Remembrance Day," to the list of state holidays. The bill would authorize community colleges and public schools to close on April 24, known as "Genocide Remembrance Day," as specified. The bill would authorize state employees to elect to take time off with pay in recognition of "Genocide Remembrance Day," as specified.

AB 1872 (Low) of 2022. This bill would have made the day of a statewide general election in even-numbered years a state holiday, and eliminates Washington Day (sometimes referred to as Presidents’ Day) as a holiday in those years. (Held on the Assembly Appropriations Committee’s Suspense File)

AB 2596 (Low), Chapter 792, Statutes of 2022. Recognized Lunar New Year as a state holiday and authorizes eligible state employees to elect to receive eight hours of holiday credit for that date in lieu of receiving eight hours of personal credit, as specified.

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 855 (Ramos), Chapter 283, Statutes of 2021. Deleted the statutory exclusion of "the fourth

Friday in September, known as "Native American Day" from the list of state holidays not recognized by the courts.

AB 177 (Low) of 2019-2020. 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)

SB 892 (Pan), Chapter 199, Statutes of 2018. Required the Governor to annually proclaim the "Lunar New Year," as specified.

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)

AB 1023 (Brough) of 2017. Proposed to designate February 6 as Ronald Reagan Day, a state holiday that would permit any state employee, as defined, to elect to receive this day as a holiday in lieu of other holidays, among other provisions. (Held in the Assembly Committee on Public Employees, Retirement, and Social Security)

AB 1973 (R. Hernández), Chapter 537, Statutes of 2014. Established the Fourth Friday in September as a state holiday to be known as "Native American Day."

SB 944 (Runner), Chapter 114, Statutes of 2010. Designates February 6 each year as "Ronald Reagan Day;" encourages public schools and educational institutions to engage in exercises commemorating the life of Ronald Reagan, and requires the Governor to annually proclaim February 6 as "Ronald Reagan Day."

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."

AB 1953 (Baca), Chapter 637, Statutes of 1998. Designated the fourth Friday in September as "Native American Day" and makes that day a state holiday.

## **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

### **Support**

California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE)

### **Opposition**

None on file

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