
THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 2294
Author: Ta (R), et al.
Amended: 8/21/26 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE GOVERNMENTAL ORG. COMMITTEE: 13-0, 6/9/26

AYES: Rubio, Valladares, Archuleta, Ashby, Blakespear, Cervantes, Dahle,
Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Richardson, Smallwood-Cuevas, Wahab, Weber Pierson

NO VOTE RECORDED: Alvarado-Gil, Hurtado

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 73-0, 5/4/26 (Consent) - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: State holidays: Sylvia Mendez Day

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This bill designates April 14 as Sylvia Mendez Day, as specified.

Senate Floor Amendments of 8/21/26 address statutory chaptering issues with similar legislation, as specified.

Senate Floor Amendments of 8/17/26 make minor and technical revisions to the Legislative findings and declarations.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Designates specific days as holidays in the state, including, among others, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.
- 2) Designates certain days as judicial holidays and exempts others including, Lunar New Year, Diwali, and Genocide Remembrance Day.

This bill:

- 1) Designates April 14, a state holiday, as Sylvia Mendez Day.
- 2) Exempts Sylvia Mendez Day from being a judicial holiday, as specified.
- 3) Includes related Legislative findings and declarations, as specified.

Background

Author Statement. 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."

State Holidays. Existing law establishes the various state holidays of California, including those deemed to be judicial holidays. While many state holidays coincide with "judicial" or "bank" holidays, a number of these dates have been exempted in law from being a judicial holiday.

Existing state holidays include:

- a) Every Sunday.
- b) January 1.
- c) The third Monday in January, known as "Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day."
- d) The 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, known as "Lunar New Year."
- e) February 12, known as "Lincoln Day."
- f) The third Monday in February.
- g) March 31, known as "Farmworkers Day."
- h) April 24, known as "Genocide Remembrance Day."
- i) The 15th day of the month of Kartik in the Hindu lunar calendar of each year, known as "Diwali."
- j) The last Monday in May.

- k) June 19, known as “Juneteenth.”
- l) July 4.
- m) The first Monday in September.
- n) September 9, known as “Admission Day.”
- o) The fourth Friday in September, known as “Native American Day.”
- p) The second Monday in October, known as “Columbus Day.”
- q) November 11, known as “Veterans Day.”
- r) December 25.
- s) Good Friday from 12 noon until 3 p.m.

This bill establishes April 14 as “Sylvia Mendez Day,” and specifically exempts that date from being included as a judicial holiday. This bill also includes related Legislative findings and declarations regarding Sylvia Mendez.

Mendez et al. v Westminster School District of Orange County et al. The landmark case of *Mendez et al. v Westminster School District of Orange County et al.*, (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*) remains a pivotal decision in the struggle for civil rights and educational equality for Mexican American students in California.

The case arose when Sylvia Mendez and approximately 5,000 similarly situated children in Orange County were denied admission to neighborhood schools and instead directed to separate “Mexican schools,” based solely on their ancestry and ethnicity. In response, Sylvia Mendez’s family, with four other families, challenged the practice in federal court. The families argued that the segregation of Mexican American students violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The federal district court agreed, and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the decision in 1947, marking a major victory for educational equity and civil rights.

Mendez v. Westminster is widely regarded as one of the earliest and most important school desegregation cases in the nation. Years before the United States Supreme Court decided *Brown v. Board of Education*, the federal Courts in California recognized that separating children based on ancestry deprived them of equal educational opportunities and underlined the principles of equality upon which public education is founded. The case also attracted support from a broad coalition of civil rights organizations including the NAACP which filed an amicus brief through attorneys – including Thurgood Marshall – who would later

successfully argue *Brown v. Board of Education* before the United States Supreme Court.

The decision's impact extended beyond the courtroom. Just months after the Ninth Circuit affirmed the ruling, Governor Earl Warren signed legislation ending statutory school segregation in California. This act made California a national leader in the movement toward integrated public education. Governor Warren would later go on to serve as the Chief Justice of the United States and the author of the unanimous opinion in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

The Mendez family was one of five plaintiff families (Gonzalo and Felicitas Mendez, Thomas and Mary Luisa Estrada, William and Virginia Guzman, Frank and Irene Palomino, Lorenzo and Josefina Ramirez). Their surname appears first because Gonzalo Mendez was the first-listed plaintiff in the legal caption, just as Westminster School District was the first-listed defendant. The legal record does not establish that the Mendez family alone initiated or led the litigation, nor does being listed first diminish the equal role played by the other plaintiff families throughout the case. Each of the five families accepted personal risk, challenged school segregation together, and remained a part of the litigation through the federal district court's decision and the Ninth Circuit's April 14, 1947, affirmation of that victory. Today, three children directly involved in the original litigation remain living: Joe Ramirez, Evelina Estrada, and Daniel Estrada.

This bill designates Sylvia Mendez Day as a state holiday and exempts that date from being considered a judicial holiday. Existing law does not require private employers to provide paid holidays or close their businesses on any holiday. Similarly, local governments and state employers retain authority under applicable laws regarding paid time off.

Not All Holidays are 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 existing law.

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.

Related/Prior Legislation

AB 1841 (Ramos, 2026) entitles state employees to a holiday on the 4th Friday in September, known as “Native American Day,” among other provisions. (Pending on the Senate Floor)

AB 2017 (Haney, 2026) adds “Eid al-Fitr” and “Eid al-Adha” to the list of state holidays, as specified. (Pending on the Senate Floor)

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

AB 2455 (Haney, Chapter 49, Statutes of 2026) requires the Governor to annually proclaim May 17 as Bruce Lee Day, and designates that date as having special significance, as specified. (Pending on the Senate Floor)

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

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: No Local: No

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/21/26)

Anaheim Union High School District
Cal Voices
California Association for Bilingual Education
California Civil Liberties Advocacy
California College Democrats
California Family Council
California Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Californians for Equal Rights Foundation

Campbell Union High School District
Chicano Federation of San Diego County
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights
Courage California
Fred T. Korematsu Institute
Garden Grove Unified School District
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
Madera Unified School District
Mountain View School District
Orange County Labor Federation
Public Advocates
The California Baptist Capitol Ministry
Vision Y Compromiso

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/21/26)

California League of United Latin American Citizens

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: In support of this bill, the California Hispanic Chamber of Commerce writes that, “[t]he *Mendez v. Westminster* decision stands as an early and pivotal affirmation of equal protection in public education. Through determination and sacrifice, Latino families successfully confronted institutional discrimination, leading California to become one of the first states to prohibit school segregation. Their efforts not only advanced justice within the state but also helped lay the groundwork for the United States Supreme Court’s later rulings on educational equality.”

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION: In opposition to this bill, the California League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) write, in part, “California LULAC deeply respects Sylvia Mendez and recognizes her decades of work educating the public about the landmark school desegregation case commonly known as *Mendez v. Westminster*. Her efforts have helped ensure that generations of Californians understand the importance of this historic civil rights victory.

Our concern is not with honoring Sylvia Mendez or her family’s contributions. Rather, it is with ensuring that California law accurately reflects the collective nature of the litigation and the many families whose courage made this victory possible.”

Further, “[t]he case was filed as *Mendez et al. v. Westminster School District of Orange County et al.* It was a class-action lawsuit brought on behalf of approximately 5,000 similarly situated Mexican American children and involved

five plaintiff families challenging segregation across four Orange County school districts. The federal district court identified Gonzalo Mendez, Thomas Estrada, William Guzman, Frank Palomino, and Lorenzo Ramirez as the fathers bringing the action on behalf of their children and the broader class.”

And finally, “California now has an opportunity to commemorate this landmark decision in a manner that is both accurate and inclusive. We respectfully request that AB 2294 be amended to recognize the collective achievement of all five plaintiff families in *Mendez et al. v. Westminster et al.*, rather than naming the observance solely after one participant.

“California LULAC stands ready to work collaboratively with your office, the surviving family members, and other stakeholders to develop amendments that appropriately recognize the full history of this landmark case. Until such amendments are adopted, California LULAC must respectfully oppose AB 2294.”

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 73-0, 5/4/26

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Carrillo, Castillo, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Ward, Wicks, Zbur, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Arambula, Bennett, Caloza, Chen, Flora, Wallis, Wilson

Prepared by: Brian Duke / G.O. / (916) 651-1530
8/24/26 13:45:31

**** END ****