

Date of Hearing: April 8, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION

Blanca Rubio, Chair

AB 2455 (Haney) – As Introduced February 20, 2026

SUBJECT: Bruce Lee Day

SUMMARY: This bill would require the Governor to annually proclaim May 17 as Bruce Lee Day to honor his life, accomplishments, and contributions to California. It would designate the date as a day of special significance, encouraging public schools and educational institutions to observe it with commemorative exercises. **Specifically, this bill:**

- 1) Provides the Governor annually shall proclaim May 17 as Bruce Lee Day.
- 2) Provides that on Bruce Lee Day, all public schools and educational institutions are encouraged to conduct exercises remembering the life of Bruce Lee, recognizing his accomplishments, and familiarizing pupils with the contributions he made to this state.
- 3) States that May 17 of each year is designated and set apart as Bruce Lee Day, a day having special significance.
- 4) Makes legislative findings and declarations relative to the life of Bruce Lee for his contributions to the Chinese American community, including his influence in the San Francisco area, his status as the first Asian American actor to play a leading role in a Hollywood movie, and his commitment to philosophy, civil rights, racial solidarity, and community.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires the Governor to proclaim various days as holidays and days of remembrance. Some examples of recognized individuals include: John Muir Day (April 21), Harvey Milk Day (May 22), Fred Korematsu Day (January 30), Ronald Reagan Day (February 6), Ed Roberts Day (January 23), Larry Itliong Day (October 25), and Dolores Huerta Day (April 10).
- 2) Designates particular days each year as having special significance and encourages all public schools and educational institutions to observe those days and to conduct suitable commemorative exercises on those days. (Education Code § 37220)
- 3) Requires, for some specified holidays for which schools are required to close (Dr. Martin Luther King Day, Lincoln Day, Washington Day), that schools conduct exercises in commemoration. (Education Code § 37220)
- 4) Designates the month of May as Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month.

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

COMMENTS:

Purpose of the bill. According to the author's office, "Bruce Lee was a symbol of pride, resilience, and possibility for generations who rarely saw themselves reflected with strength and dignity. From his birth in San Francisco to his global influence, Lee represents the creativity, resilience, and cultural diversity that defines our state. By creating Bruce Lee Day, California is honoring not only a global icon but also the first Chinese American to be recognized with a day in state law. This is about telling every young person who feels unseen that their story, their culture, and their dreams belong in the heart of California's history."

Background.

Bruce Lee (born Lee Jun-fan) was born in San Francisco on November 27, 1940, in San Francisco's Chinatown; his parents were in the city because his father was on tour with the Chinese Opera. Raised in Hong Kong, he began appearing in Chinese films as a child and by the time he was 18 had appeared in 20 films. At 13, he began studying martial arts with Wing Chun Master Yip Man.

He moved back to the U.S. in 1959 to attend college. He supported himself by teaching martial arts at schools he established in Seattle, Oakland and Los Angeles, while he and his wife, Linda, raised their son, Brandon, and daughter, Shannon. Lee quickly began to develop new ideas about martial arts and training based on his experiences, leading him to create his own art called Jeet Kune Do, or "The Way of the Intercepting Fist." He is widely regarded as one of the most important martial artists in history and played a key role in popularizing martial arts worldwide, paving the way for future stars such as Jackie Chan.

His skill and charisma led to opportunities in Hollywood. He was cast as Kato in the 1966 television series "The Green Hornet," making him one of the first Asian American actors to costar in an American television series. In 1971, he starred in the first of five legendary martial arts films that were huge financial successes and made him an international star. Lee's life was cut short when he died at age 32 of a cerebral edema caused by an allergic reaction to pain medication, just days before the release of his blockbuster hit "Enter the Dragon" (1973).¹ With this film, he became the first Asian American actor to star in a leading role in a Hollywood movie, breaking new ground for representation in American cinema.

He revolutionized the entertainment industry by breaking racial barriers and defying Asian stereotypes in Hollywood to achieve global stardom. As a cultural icon, he empowered Asian American communities, leading to his 2012 recognition by the U.S. House of Representatives as a master teacher and agent for civil rights, extending his legacy far beyond martial arts.

Bruce Lee's enduring legacy as a cultural icon is marked by numerous posthumous honors, including a Hollywood Walk of Fame star (1993), inclusion in Time's 100 most influential people (1999), induction into the California Hall of Fame (2015), and the 2024 renaming of an Oakland street to "Bruce Lee Way." Furthering this recognition, the U.S. Postal Service issued a Bruce Lee Forever stamp on February 18, 2026.



Days of special significance. The designation of a day of special significance provides statutory encouragement for public schools to recognize the day and to conduct commemorative exercises appropriate to its purpose. However, the decision to observe any such day, including whether to hold commemorative activities, remains entirely within the authority of the local governing board. If this day is observed, suitable exercises would honor Bruce Lee's life and accomplishments and highlight the contributions he made to California and the United States.

Designates specific days each year dates recognizing AAPI communities. California has established several bills that honor the cultural heritage and contributions of AAPI communities. These recognitions include, but are not limited to, Lunar New Year, Korean American Day, Diwali, Fred Korematsu Day, and Asian and Pacific Islander American Heritage Month.

In support. In support of the bill, Stand with Asians writes "Bruce Lee's legacy extends far beyond martial arts. At a time when Asian American representation was nearly nonexistent, he challenged deeply rooted stereotypes and redefined how Asian Americans are seen in media and culture, setting a new standard for visibility, dignity, and creative expression. That impact continues to resonate today. Despite being a significant and growing part of California's population, Asian Americans still face persistent challenges around representation and belonging. Recognizing Bruce Lee at the state level is both a tribute to his legacy and a meaningful step toward affirming the importance of cultural representation and inclusion. This measure presents an opportunity to unite a broad coalition across California to honor Bruce Lee's contributions and ensure his legacy is recognized for generations to come."

The Chinese Historical Society of America states, "AB 2455 honors Bruce Lee's achievements as a pioneering Chinese American leader who paved the way for greater cultural representation in the entertainment industry. This bill recognizes his legacy of inclusion and cultural exchange and ensures his influence is remembered across the state."

Prior legislation. ACR 118 (Gonzalez), Chapter 9, Statutes of 2026. Proclaimed January 13, 2026, as Korean American Day.

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.

SB 1278 (Laird), Chapter 30, Statutes of 2024. Required the Governor to annually proclaim December 1 as World AIDS Day.

SB 254 (Borgeas), Chapter 102, Statutes of 2021. Designates and sets apart September 11 of each year as September 11th Remembrance Day, a day having special significance, and encourages each public elementary and secondary school to observe a moment of silence at an appropriate time while school is in session.

AB 2644 (Reyes), Chapter 130, Statutes of 2018. Required the Governor to annually proclaim April 10 as Dolores Huerta Day, and encourages all public schools and educational institutions to conduct exercises recognizing the life of Dolores Huerta.

AB 7 (Bonta), Chapter 29, Statutes of 2015. Required the Governor to annually proclaim October 25 as Larry Itliong Day, designates that date each year as having special significance,

and encourages all public schools and educational institutions to conduct exercises remembering his life and contributions.

SB 572 (Leno), Chapter 626, Statutes of 2009. Among other things, required the Governor to annually proclaim May 22 as Harvey Milk Day.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Southern California
Asian Law Alliance
Asian Leaders Alliance
Board of Supervisors for the City and County of San Francisco
Bruce Lee Foundation
Chinatown Service Center
Chinese Culture Foundation of San Francisco
Chinese Historical Society of America
Stand With Asians

Opposition

None on file

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