

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5641

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As of February 17, 2023

**Title:** An act relating to establishing African heritage week.

**Brief Description:** Establishing African heritage week.

**Sponsors:** Senators Fortunato, Nobles, Hasegawa, Kuderer, Lovelett and Wilson, C..

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** State Government & Elections: 2/17/23.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Establishes the last full calendar week in July of each year as African heritage week.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS

**Staff:** Danielle Creech (786-7412)

**Background:** African Immigration in the United States and Washington. Africans in the United States come from different national, linguistic, ethnic, racial, cultural and social backgrounds. The influx of African immigrants began in the latter part of the 20th century, and is often referred to as the fourth great migration. About three-fourths of all out-migration from Africa after 1990 went to the United States. Between 2010 and 2015, the number of African immigrants in America more than doubled, rising from approximately 723,000 people to more than 1.7 million. African immigrants are among the most educated groups in the United States. Approximately 40 percent of all African immigrants hold a college diploma. Of this group, over 34 percent have degrees in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics.

As of 2019, there are 78,669 African-born immigrants living in Washington State. The University of Washington indicates as of 2018, the largest African-immigrant populations in

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Washington were born in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Eritrea, Gambia, South Africa, Egypt, Nigeria, and Ghana. The 78,669 African-born immigrants in Washington represent over 35 countries of birth and live in communities across the state. There is a high concentration of African immigrants in King County in particular, with King County ranking eighth among United States counties for the highest total immigrant populations from Africa.

Celebrations of Ethnic, Cultural, and Regional Heritage. Washington recognizes ethnic, cultural, and regional groups at the following times:

- May of each year as Asian Pacific American Heritage Month;
- October of each year as Filipino American History Month;
- February of each year as Black History Month;
- the Friday following the fourth Thursday in November as Native American Heritage Day; and
- January 13th of each year as Korean-American Day.

**Summary of Bill:** The last full calendar week in July of each year is recognized as African Heritage week.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: Establishing an African heritage week will help Africans and African culture blend into Washington's melting pot. It will bring healing and community to those of African descent. African immigrants and descendants should be able to practice and celebrate both the American culture and African culture. Other cultures are celebrated with holidays such as St. Patrick's Day and Cinco De Mayo, and this bill will give African cultures a celebratory week as well. While everybody should be included, this bill focuses on African immigrants as they face unique challenges that should be addressed.

OTHER: This bill only speaks to immigrant Africans, which is unintentionally divisive. It should also include all Washingtonians of African descent.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Phil Fortunato, Prime Sponsor; FLORIBERT MUBALAMA, Congolese Integration Network; Wahab Kromah, The Liberian Community of Washington State; Martha Foster Lucas, Washington State Coalition of African Community Leaders; Francoise Milinganyo, Congolese Integration Network; Eunice Ngwasi kalembu.

OTHER: Emijah Smith.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.