H-0589.1

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**HOUSE BILL 1446**

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**State of Washington 69th Legislature 2025 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Abell and Eslick

AN ACT Relating to changing the state holiday called Presidents' Day to George Washington's Birthday (observed); amending RCW 1.16.050; and creating a new section.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature finds that:

George Washington was born on February 22, 1732, in Virginia. By the time he reached the age of 16, he had completed several practice surveys and accompanied the surveyor of Prince William county on a month-long trip across the Blue Ridge mountains. In July 1749 at the young age of 17, George Washington was appointed as the county surveyor for the newly created frontier county of Culpeper. There are 199 professional surveys attributed to George Washington.

In late 1753, George Washington became involved in the French and Indian War when he was selected as the British emissary to the French frontier establishment and sent to deliver an ultimatum to the French ordering them to desist from their encroachments in the Ohio Valley. In 1754 he became lieutenant colonel of the Virginia Regiment, due in part to his backcountry knowledge and map-making skills gained from surveying. In 1774 the Virginia provincial convention elected George Washington to be one of the seven delegates to the first continental congress and he served in the second continental congress the following year. During the assembly of the second continental congress assembled in Philadelphia in May 1775, George Washington was elected Commander in Chief of the continental army. On July 3, 1775, at Cambridge, Massachusetts, he took command of the continental army.

George Washington skillfully led the continental army through all phases of the American Revolution. This includes the siege of Boston, battles of Trenton and Princeton, wintering at Valley Forge, and the decisive victory at Yorktown. Upon conclusion of combat, George Washington voluntarily resigned his commission to the second continental congress, thereby exemplifying civilian authority over the military.

After the war, George Washington was influential in shaping the various provisions of the nation's Constitution at the constitutional convention in Philadelphia in 1787. When the new Constitution was ratified by the states, the electoral college unanimously elected George Washington as the nation's first president.

George Washington served two terms as president of the United States. During his presidency, George Washington established the norms and customs for his successors, avoided combat with major European powers, and set the United States on a path to security and prosperity. He voluntarily left office in 1797, declining to run for a third term, and returned to private life at Mount Vernon.

Upon his death, George Washington was mourned by the nation and eulogized by Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee as "First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."

On November 11, 1889, the state of Washington was admitted as the 42nd state of the United States of America. Recognizing the unique historical stature of George Washington, the state was named in his honor.

In recognition of his service to this country, George Washington's birthday became the first federal holiday to honor an individual's birthdate. February 22nd was observed as a public federal holiday until 1971 when former President Nixon declared a single holiday to be called Presidents' Day which would be observed on the third Monday in February in order to honor all past presidents. However, the name Presidents' Day never became the legal name of the holiday and the day is still legally called George Washington's Birthday on official federal government writings.

With the impending 250th anniversary of the United States occurring on July 4, 2026, changing the name of the state holiday known as Presidents' Day to George Washington's Birthday (observed) is more appropriate as the nation reflects on their founding generation and the life and legacy of George Washington.

**Sec.**  RCW 1.16.050 and 2024 c 76 s 3 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The following are state legal holidays:

(a) Sunday;

(b) The first day of January, commonly called New Year's Day;

(c) The third Monday of January, celebrated as the anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther King, Jr.;

(d) The third Monday of February, to be known as ((~~Presidents' Day~~)) George Washington's Birthday (observed) and celebrated as the anniversary of the birth((~~s of Abraham Lincoln and~~)) of George Washington;

(e) The last Monday of May, commonly known as Memorial Day;

(f) The nineteenth day of June, recognized as Juneteenth, a day of remembrance for the day the African slaves learned of their freedom;

(g) The fourth day of July, the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence;

(h) The first Monday in September, to be known as Labor Day;

(i) The eleventh day of November, to be known as Veterans Day;

(j) The fourth Thursday in November, to be known as Thanksgiving Day;

(k) The Friday immediately following the fourth Thursday in November, to be known as Native American Heritage Day; and

(l) The twenty-fifth day of December, commonly called Christmas Day.

(2) Employees of the state and its political subdivisions, except employees of school districts and except those nonclassified employees of institutions of higher education who hold appointments or are employed under contracts to perform services for periods of less than twelve consecutive months, are entitled to one paid holiday per calendar year in addition to those specified in this section. Each employee of the state or its political subdivisions may select the day on which the employee desires to take the additional holiday provided for in this section after consultation with the employer pursuant to guidelines to be promulgated by rule of the appropriate personnel authority, or in the case of local government by ordinance or resolution of the legislative authority.

(3) Employees of the state and its political subdivisions, including employees of school districts and those nonclassified employees of institutions of higher education who hold appointments or are employed under contracts to perform services for periods of less than twelve consecutive months, are entitled to two unpaid holidays per calendar year for a reason of faith or conscience or an organized activity conducted under the auspices of a religious denomination, church, or religious organization. This includes employees of public institutions of higher education, including community colleges, technical colleges, and workforce training programs. The employee may select the days on which the employee desires to take the two unpaid holidays after consultation with the employer pursuant to guidelines to be promulgated by rule of the appropriate personnel authority, or in the case of local government by ordinance or resolution of the legislative authority. If an employee prefers to take the two unpaid holidays on specific days for a reason of faith or conscience, or an organized activity conducted under the auspices of a religious denomination, church, or religious organization, the employer must allow the employee to do so unless the employee's absence would impose an undue hardship on the employer or the employee is necessary to maintain public safety. Undue hardship shall have the meaning established in rule by the office of financial management under RCW 43.41.109.

(4) If any of the state legal holidays specified in this section are also federal legal holidays but observed on different dates, only the state legal holidays are recognized as a paid legal holiday for employees of the state and its political subdivisions. However, for port districts and the law enforcement and public transit employees of municipal corporations, either the federal or the state legal holiday is recognized as a paid legal holiday, but in no case may both holidays be recognized as a paid legal holiday for employees.

(5) Whenever any state legal holiday:

(a) Other than Sunday, falls upon a Sunday, the following Monday is the legal holiday; or

(b) Falls upon a Saturday, the preceding Friday is the legal holiday.

(6) Nothing in this section may be construed to have the effect of adding or deleting the number of paid holidays provided for in an agreement between employees and employers of political subdivisions of the state or as established by ordinance or resolution of the local government legislative authority.

(7) The legislature declares that the following days are recognized as provided in this subsection, but may not be considered legal holidays for any purpose:

(a) The thirteenth day of January, recognized as Korean-American day;

(b) The twelfth day of October, recognized as Columbus day;

(c) The ninth day of April, recognized as former prisoner of war recognition day;

(d) The twenty-sixth day of January, recognized as Washington army and air national guard day;

(e) The seventh day of August, recognized as purple heart recipient recognition day;

(f) The second Sunday in October, recognized as Washington state children's day;

(g) The sixteenth day of April, recognized as Mother Joseph day;

(h) The fourth day of September, recognized as Marcus Whitman day;

(i) The seventh day of December, recognized as Pearl Harbor remembrance day;

(j) The twenty-seventh day of July, recognized as national Korean war veterans armistice day;

(k) The nineteenth day of February, recognized as civil liberties day of remembrance;

(l) The thirtieth day of March, recognized as welcome home Vietnam veterans day;

(m) The eleventh day of January, recognized as human trafficking awareness day;

(n) The thirty-first day of March, recognized as Cesar Chavez day;

(o) The tenth day of April, recognized as Dolores Huerta day;

(p) The fourth Saturday of September, recognized as public lands day;

(q) The eighteenth day of December, recognized as blood donor day;

(r) The fifteenth day of May, recognized as water safety day;

(s) The ninth day of March, recognized as Billy Frank Jr. day; and

(t) 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, recognized as the lunar new year.

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