
SENATE BILL 5779

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By Senators Nobles, Fortunato, Bateman, Chapman, Cleveland, Cortes, Hasegawa, Kauffman, Lovelett, Orwall, Ramos, Saldaña, Shewmake, Stanford, Valdez, Wellman, and C. Wilson

Read first time 02/26/25. Referred to Committee on State Government, Tribal Affairs & Elections.

1 AN ACT Relating to establishing African diaspora heritage week;
2 amending RCW 1.16.050; and creating a new section.

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

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature intends to fully recognize
5 and celebrate the rich legacy of the people of African descent, their
6 independence days, holidays, cultural food, festivals, and to raise
7 awareness of their diverse community needs. Further, the legislature
8 intends to provide cultural recognition and celebration to
9 acknowledge and honor the history and cultural heritage of all the
10 people of African descent, whose communities continuously demonstrate
11 this legacy through traditional weddings, ethnic associations,
12 religious institutions, traditional customs, rites of passage, and
13 sporting events. Attendance at these events is not only an
14 educational experience for all Washingtonians, but also serves as a
15 unifying and therapeutic connection for the entire diaspora,
16 facilitating opportunities for the elderly to interact with community
17 youth to keep their minds active and to stay socially engaged.

18 Therefore, the last full calendar week in July of each year shall
19 be known as African diaspora heritage week. This is designated as a
20 time for people of this state to commemorate the contributions of

1 Americans of African descent to the history and heritage of
2 Washington state and the United States.

3 **Sec. 2.** RCW 1.16.050 and 2024 c 76 s 3 are each amended to read
4 as follows:

5 (1) The following are state legal holidays:

6 (a) Sunday;

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

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

10 (d) The third Monday of February, to be known as Presidents' Day
11 and celebrated as the anniversary of the births of Abraham Lincoln
12 and George Washington;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

32 (5) Whenever any state legal holiday:

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

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

37 (6) Nothing in this section may be construed to have the effect
38 of adding or deleting the number of paid holidays provided for in an
39 agreement between employees and employers of political subdivisions

1 of the state or as established by ordinance or resolution of the
2 local government legislative authority.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

39 ((and))

1 (t) The date corresponding with the second new moon following the
2 winter solstice, or the third new moon following the winter solstice
3 should an intercalary month intervene, recognized as the lunar new
4 year; and
5 (u) The last full calendar week of July, recognized as African
6 diaspora heritage week.

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