
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Carol Liu, Chair
2015 - 2016 Regular

Bill No: SB 616
Author: Huff
Version: January 4, 2016
Urgency: No
Consultant: Olgalilia Ramirez
Hearing Date: January 13, 2016
Fiscal: No

Subject: Public schools: Asian Lunar New Year's Day

SUMMARY

This bill designates the date corresponding with the start of the Asian Lunar calendar of each year as Asian Lunar New Year's Day, and encourages public schools to recognize it as a special day of significance.

BACKGROUND

Existing law designates a number of days as days of special significance to the public schools and educational institutions and encourages them to observe that day, including Larry Itliong Day (October 25), Ronald Reagan Day (February 6), John Muir Day (April 21), and Harvey Milk Day (May 22). (Education Code § 37222 – § 37222.17)

Existing law also requires public schools to close on a number of holidays, including January 1, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Lincoln Day, Washington Day, Memorial Day, July 4, Labor Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day, December 25, all days appointed by the Governor or the President of the United States for a public fast, holiday, and any other day designated as a holiday by the governing board of the school district. Existing law requires that for some specified holidays for which schools are required to close (Dr. Martin Luther King Day, Lincoln Day, and Washington Day), schools conduct exercises in commemoration. (EC § 37220 – § 37221)

ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Makes various findings and declarations relative to the Asian Lunar New Year and the contributions of the Asian and Pacific Islander American community to the social, cultural, civic, economic, and academic success of California.
- 2) Requires the Governor to designate the date corresponding with the start of the Asian Lunar calendar of each year as Asian Lunar New Year's Day, as specified.
- 3) Encourages all public schools and educational institutions to conduct exercises observing the Asian Lunar New Year with appropriate activities and programs.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, naming Lunar New Year as a special day of significance encourages classroom conversations about a major holiday celebrated in the eastern part of the world and by millions of California residents. The author further asserts that it is essential to support these conversations to help build a greater sense of inclusion and community particularly among members of the Asian community.
- 2) ***Asian Lunar New Year.*** The Lunar New Year traditionally occurs in late January or early February and is one of the most significant cultural holidays for Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and other Asian ethnic groups. With Asian-American communities in all regions across the state, the holiday is a popular annual celebration in California. As such, many schools organize related activities and at least one California school district, San Francisco Unified, observes the tradition by closing its schools for the day. This bill statutorily recognizes Asian Lunar New Year as a day of having special significance in which public schools and educational institutions are encouraged but not required to conduct exercises celebrating the occasion.
- 3) ***Discretionary activities.*** Current law encourages all public schools and educational institutions to observe each day designated and set apart as a day having special significance, and to conduct suitable commemorative exercises. These are not required activities. Current law also includes legislative intent that exercises be integrated into the regular school program and be conducted by the school within the amount of time otherwise budgeted for educational programs.

SUPPORT

Chinese American Equalization Association
Asians for Lunar New Year Group
Joint Chinese University Alumni Association of Southern California

OPPOSITION

None received.

-- END --