

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2013 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 34

(Delegate Aumann, *et al.*)

Health and Government Operations

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

State Government - Commemorative Month - German-American Heritage Month

This bill requires the Governor to annually proclaim October as German-American Heritage Month and to urge educational and cultural organizations to observe German-American Heritage Month with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2013.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Commemorating German-American Heritage Month does not affect State finances.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Nine official commemorative days and three months are recognized in State law as shown in **Exhibit 1**. The Governor also must issue a proclamation each year encouraging citizens and other individuals to observe a moment of silence at 3 p.m. on Memorial Day to unite in remembrance and commemorate the heroic acts and efforts of Marylanders who have served and died in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Background: German-Americans comprise the largest self-reported ancestral group in the State, as well as in the nation. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 13.8% of

Marylanders are of German-American descent. Both the western and northern parts of the State have large German-American populations. German-Americans have been highly influential in American history and society, and a number of German-American celebrations are held annually in major cities across the United States.

Americans have long associated October with Germany due to the number of German holidays and festivals that occur during the month, in particular, Oktoberfest. Oktoberfest, a 16-day beer festival, is one of the world's largest fairs and is known all around the world. It began when the citizens of Munich were invited to attend festivities held on the fields in front of the city gates to celebrate the royal marriage of Crown Prince Ludwid, to Princess Therese of Saxe-Hildburghausen on October 12, 1810. In 1819, the citizens of Munich decided to make Oktoberfest an annual event. The event has inspired numerous similar events using the name *Oktoberfest* in Germany and around the world, many of which were founded by German immigrants or their descendants.

October 3 is the Day of German Unity; it has been a German national holiday since the reunification of East and West Germany in 1990. It is celebrated each year with ceremonial acts and festivals in the federal capital of Berlin and in the capital of the German state presiding over the federal council, or Bundesrat.

German-American Day, observed annually on October 6, was first celebrated in the nineteenth century. The commemoration later died out as a result of anti-German sentiment that prevailed in the first half of the twentieth century, but was revived in 1983 when President Ronald Reagan proclaimed October 6 as German-American Day to celebrate three centuries of German-American immigration and culture. In 1987, President Regan signed the commemoration into law.

Exhibit 1
Official Commemorative Days and Months in Maryland

Asian Lunar New Year Day ¹	January/February
Black History Month	February
Women's History Month	March
Crime Victim and Advocate Day	April 3
John Hanson's Birthday ²	April 13
Negro Baseball League Day ³	May
Law Day	May 1
Fire, Rescue, and Emergency Services Workers Day ⁴	June
Maryland Charter Day	June 20
Hispanic Heritage Month ⁵	September/October
Poetry Day	October 15
Annapolis Charter Day	December 17

¹Day designated as new year on the Asian lunar calendar.

²John Hanson served as the first president of the Continental Congress under the Articles of Confederation from 1781 to 1782.

³Commemorated on the second Saturday in May.

⁴Commemorated on the first Sunday in June.

⁵Commemorated from September 15 to October 15.

Source: Department of Legislative Services

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: SB 17 (Senator Klausmeier, *et al.*) - Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

Information Source(s): U.S. Census Bureau, German Missions in the United States, Department of Legislative Services

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