

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 716 (Delegate R. Watson, *et al.*)
Health and Government Operations

General Provisions - Commemorative Days - Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day

This bill requires the Governor to annually proclaim the fourth Thursday in March as Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day. The proclamation must urge educational and cultural organizations to observe Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day through appropriate and informative programs and activities.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Commemorating Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day does not affect State finances.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Sixteen official commemorative days, seven months, and one week 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 3:00 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.

Exhibit 1
Official Commemorative Days and Months in Maryland

Asian Lunar New Year Day ¹	January/February
Black History Month	February
Irish-American Heritage Month	March
Women's History Month	March
Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day	March 30
Crime Victim and Advocate Commemorative Day	April 3
John Hanson's Birthday ²	April 13
National Healthcare Decisions Day	April 16
Maryland Centenarians Day ³	May
Negro Baseball League Day ⁴	May
Law Day U.S.A.	May 1
Fire, Rescue, and Emergency Services Workers Day ⁵	June
Chesapeake Bay Awareness Week ⁶	June
Juneteenth National Freedom Day	June 19
Maryland Charter Day	June 20
Thurgood Marshall Day	July 2
Caribbean Heritage Month	August
Hispanic Heritage Month ⁷	September/October
German-American Heritage Month	October
South Asian American Heritage Day	October 2
Poetry Day	October 15
American Indian Heritage Month	November
Maryland Emancipation Day	November 1
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 Thursday in May.

⁴Commemorated on the second Saturday in May.

⁵Commemorated on the first Sunday in June.

⁶Commemorated during the second week in June.

⁷Commemorated from September 15 to October 15.

Source: Department of Legislative Services

Background: According to the National Park Service (NPS), prior to World War II, opportunities for African American participation in the U.S. military were very limited and controversial. In the early 1940s, after succumbing to public pressure, the army decided to train a small number of African American pilot cadets under special conditions. In 1941, the army awarded a contract to Tuskegee Institute to operate a primary flight school at Moton Field. Tuskegee Institute was one of a very few American institutions, and the only African American institution, to own, develop, and control facilities for military flight instruction. The Tuskegee Airmen were the first African American soldiers to successfully complete their training and enter the Army Air Corps.

Although military leaders were hesitant to use the Tuskegee Airmen in combat, the airmen eventually saw considerable action in North Africa and Europe. Acceptance from Army Air Forces units came slowly, but the courageous and, in many cases, heroic performance of the Tuskegee Airmen earned them increased combat opportunities and respect. NPS instructs that the Tuskegee Airmen reflect the struggle of African Americans to achieve equal rights, not only through legal attacks on the system of segregation but also through the techniques of nonviolent direct action aimed at segregation in the military.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: SB 20 (Senator Patterson) - Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

Information Source(s): National Park Service, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 19, 2020
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