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**HOUSE BILL 1116**

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

**By** Representative Mena

AN ACT Relating to recognizing election day; amending RCW 1.16.050; adding a new section to chapter 29A.04 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature finds that free and fair elections are the cornerstone of American democracy, and the corresponding right to vote is among the most fundamental privileges of American citizenship. Holding steadfast to these principles, the state of Washington has a long history of protecting Washingtonians' right to vote in elections, easing barriers to participation, combating attempts to suppress turnout, and promoting civic engagement. As a result, Washington routinely ranks among the highest states in the nation in voter participation, and it has some of the most accessible voting policies in the nation.

The legislature believes that celebrating election day serves as an important reminder of the crucial role of elections in our society. Further, the legislature believes that celebrating election day encourages participation in the democratic process and instills civic values in Washingtonians. Therefore, to increase awareness and participation in elections, and to commemorate this foundational American institution, the legislature intends to recognize the first Tuesday after the first Monday of November as "election day."

**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 and celebrated as the anniversary of the births of Abraham Lincoln and 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; and

(u) The first Tuesday after the first Monday of November, recognized as election day.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 29A.04 RCW to read as follows:

The legislature encourages state governmental entities, local governments, schools and institutions of higher education, and cultural organizations to recognize election day and engage in educational programming related to democracy and voting. The office of the secretary of state shall create election day programming and materials that these entities may use in planning and structuring their recognitions. For purposes of this section, "election day" is the first Tuesday after the first Monday of November.

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