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**SENATE BILL 5779**

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**State of Washington**

**69th Legislature**

**2025 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Nobles and Fortunato

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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