

## CHAPTER 335

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**GOVERNMENT - STATE**

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**HOUSE BILL 23-1271**

BY REPRESENTATIVE(S) Gonzales-Gutierrez and Soper, Bacon, Bird, Boesenecker, Brown, Dickson, Duran, Epps, Froelich, Hamrick, Lieder, Lindsay, Lindstedt, Mabrey, Michaelson Jenet, Sharbini, Sirota, Titone, Velasco, Weissman, Willford, Woodrow, Young;

also SENATOR(S) Gonzales, Bridges, Danielson, Exum, Gardner, Hansen, Hinrichsen, Kirkmeyer, Kolker, Marchman, Moreno, Mullica, Priola, Roberts, Rodriguez, Sullivan, Winter F., Fenberg.

**AN ACT****CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF LUNAR NEW YEAR DAY AS AN OBSERVED STATE HOLIDAY.**

*Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

**SECTION 1. Legislative declaration.** (1) The general assembly finds and declares that:

(a) Designating Lunar New Year Day as an observed state holiday permits Coloradans the time to celebrate Asian American culture and recognize an important part of the fabric of United States diversity.

(b) The Lunar New Year can be traced back to the 14th century B.C. in China and is based on the lunar calendar. The beginning of the new year usually commences between late January and mid-February and is one of the most important holidays for many Asian American communities. The Asian diaspora has expanded the Lunar New Year Day celebration into an annual worldwide event that is celebrated by about two-thirds of Asian Americans and many Asians and non-Asians from China, Viet Nam, Taiwan, South Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and many other places.

(c) Over two billion people celebrate Lunar New Year worldwide. Participants in Lunar New Year uphold the tradition of spending time and sharing blessings with family and loved ones. It is traditionally a period to wish upon others good fortune, health, prosperity, and happiness.

(d) Currently, Lunar New Year Day is a recognized school holiday in cities and

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*Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material added to existing law; dashes through words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law and such material is not part of the act.*

counties across the United States including New York City, Iowa City, San Francisco, Montgomery County in Maryland, and Philadelphia, all of which have decided to close schools for a day each year to observe the holiday.

(e) For many Asian Americans, Lunar New Year Day is an incredibly important, festive, and deeply traditional holiday. It is the most significant time of the year for the community and is celebrated in the United States and across the globe. With the Asian American community being the fastest growing population in the United States, and with the popularity of the holiday continuing to grow, recognizing Lunar New Year Day as a state holiday would bring attention to the value of the holiday and the people who celebrate it.

(f) Additionally, for the past three years, Asian Americans have been experiencing a surge in anti-Asian hate crime. Since the COVID-19 pandemic started, police departments have reported an increase in hate crimes targeted at Asian Americans. A growing population coupled with increased activism has boosted Asian American visibility and political power just as a rising tide of anti-Asian sentiment has led to discrimination, isolation, and violence against people of Asian descent. Increasing the visibility of cultural traditions that are widely celebrated among the Asian diaspora would serve as a counterbalance to the marginalization that many in the Asian American community have encountered over the years.

(g) The general assembly further finds and declares that adding Lunar New Year Day to the list of Colorado's observed holidays is an important step toward sending a powerful message of inclusion and embracement of the Asian American community and culture. Recognizing Lunar New Year Day as an observed holiday would not only lift up a community of people who have been historically marginalized but would also send a powerful message that the state of Colorado embraces diversity.

(2) The general assembly further finds and declares that:

(a) Observing Lunar New Year Day as a state holiday would allow more Coloradans to acknowledge and honor this momentous tradition and invite the wider community to celebrate this holiday.

(b) It is appropriate to recognize the cultural and historical significance of Lunar New Year and acknowledge all individuals who celebrate this significant occasion by designating Lunar New Year Day as an observed state holiday.

**SECTION 2.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add** 24-11-115 as follows:

**24-11-115. Lunar New Year Day.** THE FIRST FRIDAY OF FEBRUARY IN EACH YEAR IS KNOWN AS "LUNAR NEW YEAR DAY". APPROPRIATE OBSERVANCE MAY BE HELD BY THE PUBLIC AND IN ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF THE STATE.

**SECTION 3. Act subject to petition - effective date.** This act takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day following the expiration of the ninety-day period after final adjournment of the general assembly; except that, if a referendum petition is filed pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V of the state constitution against this act or an

item, section, or part of this act within such period, then the act, item, section, or part will not take effect unless approved by the people at the general election to be held in November 2024 and, in such case, will take effect on the date of the official declaration of the vote thereon by the governor.

Approved: June 2, 2023