

Date of Hearing: March 25, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Darshana R. Patel, Chair
AB 2455 (Haney) – As Introduced February 20, 2026

SUBJECT: Bruce Lee Day

SUMMARY: Designates May 17th of each year as Bruce Lee Day, and encourages public schools to recognize it as a day of special significance. Specifically, **this bill**:

- 1) Makes findings and declarations relative to the life of Bruce Lee for his contributions to the Chinese American community, including his influence in the San Francisco area, his status as the first Asian American actor to play a leading role in a Hollywood movie, and his commitment to philosophy, civil rights, racial solidarity, and community.
- 2) Designates May 17th of each year as Bruce Lee Day, a day of special significance, and requires the Governor to annually proclaim May 17th of each year as Bruce Lee Day.
- 3) Encourages all public schools and educational institutions to observe this day and conduct exercises remembering the life of Bruce Lee, including his accomplishments and the contributions he made to California.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Designates a number of days as days of special significance, which all educational institutions are encouraged to observe by integrating commemorative exercises into their regular school program. Those recognizing specific individuals are John Muir Day (April 21), Harvey Milk Day (May 22), Fred Korematsu Day (January 30), Ronald Reagan Day (February 6), Ed Roberts Day (January 23), Larry Itliong Day (January 23rd), and Dolores Huerta Day (April 10). (Education Code (EC) 37222)
- 2) Requires public schools to close on a number of holidays, including January 1, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Lincoln Day, Washington Day, Memorial Day, July 4, Labor Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day, December 25, all days designated by the Governor or the President of the United States for a public fast, thanksgiving or holiday, and any other day designated as a holiday by the governing board of a local school district. (EC 37220)
- 3) Requires, for some specified holidays for which schools are required to close (Dr. Martin Luther King Day, Lincoln Day, Washington Day), that schools conduct exercises in commemoration. (EC 37220)
- 4) Authorizes public schools to close on two other days if the governing board, pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement, agrees to close schools for that purpose. These days are César Chávez Day (March 31) and Native American Day (fourth Friday in September). (EC 37220.5)
- 5) Requires public schools to remain open on specified days (unless otherwise closed to mark a holiday by decision of the governing board), and to celebrate the significance of those days with appropriate commemorative exercises. These days are the anniversary of the adoption

of the U.S. Constitution, the birthdays of Luther Burbank (March 7) and Susan B. Anthony (February 15), and the death of Crispus Attucks (March 5). (EC37221)

FISCAL EFFECT: This bill has been keyed non-fiscal by the Office of Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS:

Need for the bill. According to the author, “Bruce Lee was a symbol of pride, resilience, and possibility for generations who rarely saw themselves reflected with strength and dignity. From his birth in San Francisco to his global influence, Lee represents the creativity, resilience, and cultural diversity that defines our state. By creating Bruce Lee Day, California is honoring not only a global icon but also the first Chinese American to be recognized with a day in state law. This is about telling every young person who feels unseen that their story, their culture, and their dreams belong in the heart of California’s history.”

Days of special significance. The designation of a day of special significance triggers statutory encouragement for public schools to observe the day and to conduct commemorative exercises suitable to the day. However, whether to observe any day of significance or conduct commemorative exercises remains a local decision of the governing board. If this day is observed, then suitable exercises would recognize Bruce Lee’s life and accomplishments, as well as the contributions that he made to California and the United States.

Other dates recognizing Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities. California has enacted several measures recognizing the cultural contributions of AAPI individuals and communities. These include, but are not limited to: Lunar New Year, Korean American Day, Diwali, Fred Korematsu Day, and Asian and Pacific Islander American Heritage Month.

Asian American representation in Hollywood. Recent scholarship has highlighted the need for greater representation of Asian American communities in the film industry. A 2018 study found that in the 86 years of the Oscars, four out of 344 awards went to Asian actors (0.01%), while 320 (93%) went to white actors (Snickler, 2014). As of 2026, six Asian American actors have won Oscar awards. Another study reviewed the 500 most popular films released between 2010 and 2014, and found that white actors held 84% of on-screen roles while Asian actors held 3%. Other scholars have found that Asian actors are frequently typecast cast in roles that reflect current racial stereotypes (Zhang, 2025; Smyth 2020).

Arguments in support. The Chinese Historical Society of America states, “Regardless of how long Asian Americans have lived in the United States, they continue to face exclusion in American society. California is home to 7.2 million Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (AANHPI). Despite making up a major population of our state, these communities continue to face barriers including racial discrimination in exclusion. According to a survey by the Pew Research Center, about one-third of Asian Americans have reported feeling treated as ‘foreigners’ and have been subjected to racist rhetoric. Additionally, the AANHPI community faced heightened levels of anti-Asian hate during the COVID pandemic. Approximately 4 in 10 U.S.-born Asian Americans know of an Asian individual who was threatened or attacked since the pandemic first began.

During Bruce Lee’s lifetime, these challenges were even more significant. Asian American representation in the film and media space was very limited to minor roles or roles that paint

them as the villain. Lee's success challenged these stereotypes, paving the way for generations of Asian American performers and artists. Despite Lee's impact on California, the state has never formally recognized his contributions. This bill will be the first bill in our state to honor a Chinese American.

AB 2455 honors Bruce Lee's achievements as a pioneering Chinese American leader who paved the way for greater cultural representation in the entertainment industry. This bill recognizes his legacy of inclusion and cultural exchange and ensures his influence is remembered across the state."

Related legislation. ACR 118 (Gonzalez), Chapter 9, Statutes of 2026, proclaims January 13, 2026, as Korean American Day.

AB 268 (Kalra), Chapter 358 of the 2025 Session, adds Diwali to the list of state holidays, authorizes public schools and community colleges to close on Diwali, and authorizes state employees to elect to take specified leave in recognition of Diwali.

SCR 58 (Wahab), Chapter 117, Statutes of 2025, recognizes May 2025 as Asian and Pacific Islander American Heritage Month, and commends Asian and Pacific Islander Americans for their notable accomplishments and contributions to California.

AB 2596 (Low), Chapter 792, Statutes of 2022, recognizes Lunar New Year as a state holiday and authorizes eligible state employees to elect to receive eight hours of holiday credit for that date in lieu of receiving eight hours of personal credit, as specified.

AB 2644 (Reyes), Chapter 130, Statutes of 2018, requires the Governor to annually proclaim April 10 as Dolores Huerta Day, sets apart that date as a date having special significance, and encourages all public schools and educational institutions to conduct exercises remembering the life of Dolores Huerta.

AB 1775 (Furutani), Chapter 241, Statutes of 2010, designates January 30 of each year as Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties and the Constitution, a day of special significance.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Bruce Lee Foundation
Asian Americans Advancing Justice of Southern California
Asian Law Alliance
Chinatown Service Center
Chinese Historical Society of America

Opposition

None filed.

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