

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 2598

**Introduced by Assembly Members Ting, Bonta, Chau, Chiu, Chu,
Low, and Williams**
(Principal coauthor: Senator Pan)

February 19, 2016

An act to add Section 37222.19 to the Education Code, and to add Section 6726 to the Government Code, relating to public schools.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2598, as introduced, Ting. Lunar New Year's Day.

Existing law requires the Governor to proclaim certain days each year for specified reasons. Existing law also designates particular days each year as having special significance in public schools and educational institutions and encourages those entities to conduct suitable commemorative exercises on those dates.

This bill would require the Governor to annually proclaim the date corresponding with the start of the lunar calendar as Lunar New Year's Day, would designate that date each year as having special significance in public schools and educational institutions, and would encourage those entities to observe that date by conducting culturally appropriate activities and exercises observing the Lunar New Year.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the
2 following:

1 (a) The Lunar New Year is celebrated in many Asian
2 communities around the world, including in the United States, and
3 especially in California.

4 (b) San Francisco's Chinese New Year celebration originated
5 in the 1860s as a way for the Chinese, who flocked to San
6 Francisco to work in the gold mines and on the railroad, to share
7 their culture with others who perceived them as different. The San
8 Francisco festival and parade have evolved into the largest
9 celebration of its kind in North America and outside of China.

10 (c) California is now home to nearly six million Asian and
11 Pacific Islander Americans of Bangladeshi, Cambodian, Chinese,
12 Filipino, Hmong, Indian, Indonesian, Iu-Mien, Japanese, Korean,
13 Laotian, Malaysian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Taiwanese, and
14 Vietnamese descent.

15 (d) The Asian and Pacific Islander American community has
16 contributed to the social, cultural, civic, economic, and academic
17 success of the state.

18 (e) The Lunar New Year is predominantly observed by over 2.5
19 million Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese residents of California.

20 (f) The Lunar New Year is universally celebrated by these
21 communities as a time to renew family ties and to start the new
22 year with a clean slate.

23 (g) The spirit of the Lunar New Year is especially significant
24 for communities whose families have been forcibly kept separated,
25 both historically through discriminatory and xenophobic laws such
26 as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Immigration Act of
27 1917 that barred Asian and Pacific Islander immigration into the
28 United States, and currently in light of continued deportations and
29 challenges to programs such as Deferred Action for Childhood
30 Arrivals (DACA) and Deferred Action for Parents of Americans
31 and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) that aim to keep families
32 unified. It is estimated that 1.5 million California immigrants could
33 be eligible for relief under DACA and DAPA.

34 (h) The Lunar New Year is also a celebration of prosperity,
35 strength, good health, and long life. Policies like the federal Patient
36 Protection and Affordable Care Act (Public Law 111-148) and
37 extensions of the Medi-Cal program to all children, including those
38 who are undocumented, ensure access to comprehensive health
39 insurance, instead of reliance on emergency care, so all members
40 of the community can benefit from positive health outcomes.

1 (i) The celebration of the Lunar New Year in communities and
2 schools throughout California illustrates the state's rich cultural
3 history and commitment to racial, religious, and cultural diversity.

4 SEC. 2. Section 37222.19 is added to the Education Code, to
5 read:

6 37222.19. (a) The date corresponding with the start of the
7 lunar calendar of each year is designated and set apart as Lunar
8 New Year's Day, a day having special significance pursuant to
9 Section 37222.

10 (b) On Lunar New Year's Day, all public schools and
11 educational institutions are encouraged to conduct culturally
12 appropriate activities and exercises observing the Lunar New Year.

13 SEC. 3. Section 6726 is added to the Government Code, to
14 read:

15 6726. The Governor annually shall proclaim the date
16 corresponding with the start of the lunar calendar as Lunar New
17 Year's Day.