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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

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A N A C T

RELATING TO HOLIDAYS AND DAYS OF SPECIAL OBSERVANCE -- HOLIDAYS

Introduced By: Representatives Stewart, Morales, Cruz, Tanzi, Sanchez, Kazarian,
Alzate, Handy, Kislak, and Potter

Date Introduced: February 28, 2025

Referred To: House Special Legislation

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Legislative Findings and Intent.

2 (1) Although officially referred to as "Victory Day" since 1948, this R.I. holiday has often
3 been known popularly as "VJ Day" or "Victory over Japan Day" given the proximity of the
4 holiday's date (the second Monday of August) to the use of the atomic bombs on Japan (August 6
5 and 9, 1945) and the announcement of Japan's surrender (August 15, 1945). This association with
6 "Victory over Japan" persists, despite the State's efforts and resistance.

7 (2) While the holiday highlights military victory, it belies the harsh truth that military
8 victories are often built on civilian injury and death. In every war, civilian suffering and casualties
9 have been a mainstay. By renaming the day, Rhode Island can affirm a commitment to the
10 desirability of peace and the continued need to work for it and remember that in every military
11 conflict in which peace is not achieved, civilian populations continue to suffer and die. Civilian
12 suffering includes malnutrition, physical injury, displacement, and sexual violence, including rape.

13 (3) Annually, the United States honors the sacrifices of warriors and their families by
14 observing Memorial Day which recognizes military personnel who died in service to our country,
15 especially in battle or as a result of wounds sustained in battle and Veterans Day which honors
16 everyone who has served in the military, whether or not they served in wartime or died in battle.
17 Victory Day focuses only on the Second World War, and as such, makes the Second World War
18 the only war with its own state holiday. Rhode Island is the only state in the U.S. that celebrates
19 Victory Day.

1 (4) By replacing "Victory Day" with "Peace & Remembrance Day," our state would
2 recognize that:

3 (i) The United States engaged in racially discriminatory treatment of first and second
4 generation Japanese Americans residing on its mainland through its policy of incarceration during
5 the Second World War;

6 (ii) Historians have cast doubt on the military necessity of using the atomic bombs on
7 Japan;

8 (iii) In addition to using the atomic bombs, the aerial bombardments that were used at the
9 conclusion of the war with Japan included firebombing;

10 (iv) These forms of warfare by bombing make "total war" which by definition targets
11 civilians for death and suffering;

12 (v) During the Second World War, total war resulted in over 50 million civilian casualties;

13 (vi) As military technology develops, civilian misery continues;

14 (vii) The federal military budget has long been the largest in the world, and by a wide
15 margin. Money spent for the military is money not spent on other priorities including housing,
16 healthcare, infrastructure, and education; and

17 (viii) The potential for catastrophe from nuclear weapons and disruptive technologies
18 continues to increase.

19 SECTION 2. Section 25-1-1 of the General Laws in Chapter 25-1 entitled "Holidays" is
20 hereby amended to read as follows:

21 **25-1-1. General holidays enumerated.**

22 The first day of January or, in the event that day is a Saturday or Sunday, then state
23 employees will celebrate the holiday on the following Monday (as New Year's Day), the third
24 Monday of January (as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday), the third Monday of February (as
25 Washington's Birthday), the fourth day of May (as Rhode Island Independence Day), the last
26 Monday of May (as Memorial Day), the nineteenth day of June or, in the event that day is a
27 Saturday or Sunday, then state employees will celebrate the holiday on the following Monday (as
28 Juneteenth National Freedom Day), the fourth day of July or, in the event that day is a Saturday or
29 Sunday, then state employees will celebrate the holiday on the following Monday (as Independence
30 Day), the second Monday of August (~~as Victory Day~~) ([as Peace and Remembrance Day](#)), the first
31 Monday of September (as Labor Day), the second Monday of October (as Columbus Day), the
32 eleventh day of November or, in the event that day is a Saturday or Sunday, then state employees
33 will celebrate the holiday on the following Monday (as Veterans' Day), the twenty-fifth day of
34 December, or in the event that day is a Saturday or Sunday, then state employees will celebrate the

1 holiday on the following Monday (as Christmas Day), and each of the above days in every year, or
2 when either of the above days falls on the first day of the week, then the day following it, the
3 Tuesday next after the first Monday in November in each year in which a general election of state
4 officers is held (as election day), the first day of every week (commonly called Sunday), and any
5 other days as the governor or general assembly of this state or the president or the congress of the
6 United States shall appoint as holidays for any purpose, days of thanksgiving, or days of solemn
7 fast, shall be holidays.

8 SECTION 3. Section 25-1-1.3 of the General Laws in Chapter 25-1 entitled "Holidays" is
9 hereby repealed.

10 ~~**25-1-1.3. Victory Day — Prohibition against use of other name for holiday.**~~

11 ~~No state or municipal governmental department or agency shall refer to the second Monday~~
12 ~~of August, "Victory Day" by any other name in an advertisement paid for by the department or~~
13 ~~agency.~~

14 SECTION 4. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
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RELATING TO HOLIDAYS AND DAYS OF SPECIAL OBSERVANCE -- HOLIDAYS

- 1 This act would change the name of the holiday on the second Monday of August from
- 2 Victory Day to Peace and Remembrance Day.
- 3 This act would take effect upon passage.

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