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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

HOUSE RESOLUTION

COMMEMORATING LAO NEW YEAR (PI MAI LAO): A CELEBRATION OF RENEWAL,
CULTURE, AND RESILIENCE ON APRIL 14 – APRIL 16, 2026

Introduced By: Representatives Slater, Shekarchi, Blazejewski, Morales, Chippendale,
Diaz, Kennedy, Ajello, Fellela, and Boylan

Date Introduced: April 09, 2026

Referred To: House read and passed

1 WHEREAS, Lao New Year, known as Pi Mai Lao or Songkran is annually observed in
2 April to mark the beginning of the Lao solar new year and is the most significant and widely
3 celebrated holiday in Lao culture; and

4 WHEREAS, The holiday is celebrated with a festival symbolizing renewal, purification,
5 and hope for a prosperous future, and includes the traditional customs of the ceremonial pouring
6 of water, representing the washing away of misfortunes and bad luck, and the welcoming of
7 health, happiness, and good fortune; and

8 WHEREAS, Additional celebrated customs include Baci (Sou Khuan) ceremonies,
9 offering alms to monks, cleaning homes and temples, building sand stupas, and joyful water-
10 splashing celebrations; and

11 WHEREAS, For Laotian people around the world, Pi Mai is not only a celebration, but
12 also a time to honor their history and cultural identity. Following the Laotian Civil War and the
13 fall of the Royal Lao Government in 1975, many Lao families were forced to flee their homeland,
14 resettling in countries like the United States as refugees. These events fractured families,
15 disrupted traditions, and caused significant hardship and trauma. Yet, in the face of these
16 hardships, the Lao people demonstrated remarkable resilience, by preserving their language,
17 customs, and faith in their new homelands; and

18 WHEREAS, There are two Lao flags, one representing the past and one signifying the
19 present. The first is the Royal Kingdom of Laos Flag, which features red stripes with a white

1 three-headed elephant under a parasol on a blue background, and represents the former Kingdom
2 of Laos (1947–1975), which for many symbolizes their origins, freedom, and the homeland they
3 were forced to leave behind. The second is the National Flag of the Lao People’s Democratic
4 Republic (Lao PDR), which consists of red-blue-red stripes with a white circle, and is the official
5 flag of the current government, adopted in 1975, and represents the nation of Laos today; and

6 WHEREAS, According to the 2023 US Census Data, there are an estimated 245,000
7 people in the United States who identify as Laotian alone, the majority of which are men, women
8 and dependents of refugees who escaped Laos during the upheaval of the 1970s, and entered
9 refugee camps in Thailand across the Mekong River, many of whom later emigrated to the United
10 States during the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s; and

11 WHEREAS, Rhode Island has a vibrant Laotian American community that has enriched
12 the State’s cultural fabric by contributing to civic life, education, public service, business, music,
13 dance, and especially cuisine, and it is important to recognize and celebrate Pi Mai as a proud
14 opportunity to reflect on the community’s struggles, honor its ancestors, and celebrate its
15 enduring heritage; now, therefore be it

16 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island hereby
17 commemorates Lao New Year “Pi Mai Lao”, on April 14-16, 2026 and extends best wishes to the
18 Lao people on the occasion of Lao New Year, wishing everyone a healthy, prosperous, and joyful
19 “Pi Mai”; and be it further

20 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
21 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to the President of Temple Wat Lao in Smithfield,
22 Mr. Phouangphet.

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