

HOLIDAYS AND OBSERVANCES (38 PA.C.S.) - HOLIDAYS AND OBSERVANCES

Act of Nov. 17, 2021, P.L. 435, No. 87

Cl. 38

Session of 2021

No. 2021-87

SB 248

AN ACT

Amending Title 38 (Holidays and Observances) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, providing for holidays and observances.

The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hereby enacts as follows:

Section 1. Title 38 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes is amended by adding parts to read:

PART I

GENERAL PROVISIONS

(Reserved)

PART II

SPECIAL OBSERVANCES

Chapter

11. Preliminary Provisions (Reserved)

13. Veteran Recognition

15. First Responders Recognition

CHAPTER 11

PRELIMINARY PROVISIONS

(Reserved)

CHAPTER 13

VETERAN RECOGNITION

Sec.

1301. Scope of chapter.

1302. Persian Gulf War Veterans Day.

1303. Global War on Terrorism Veterans Day.

§ 1301. Scope of chapter.

This chapter recognizes the contributions of veterans of the United States Armed Forces from this Commonwealth in major conflicts since the Vietnam War.

§ 1302. Persian Gulf War Veterans Day.

(a) Legislative findings and declarations.--The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

(1) On August 2, 1990, Saddam Hussein ordered Iraqi troops to invade and occupy the sovereign nation of Kuwait.

(2) The United States led an international coalition demanding Saddam Hussein to withdraw Iraqi forces from Kuwait by January 15, 1991.

(3) After Iraq failed to meet the deadline passed by the United Nations Security Council, President George H. W. Bush on January 16, 1991, ordered United States Armed Forces to begin Operation Desert Storm.

(4) On January 17, 1991, 750,000 coalition forces from 36 nations, including 540,000 United States Armed Forces, began the battle to liberate Kuwait from occupation.

(5) After an intensive air campaign, coalition forces liberated Kuwait City on February 28, 1991.

(6) On March 6, 1991, after negotiating a cease-fire, President Bush announced the end of combat operations.

(7) By the end of the conflict, 200 United States Armed Forces members were killed, including 29 from this Commonwealth.

(8) The bravery of United States Armed Forces and their allies should be recognized for the liberation of Kuwait and restoration of Kuwait's sovereignty as an independent nation.

(b) Designation.--March 6 of each year is designated as Persian Gulf War Veterans Day.

(c) Proclamation.--The Governor shall issue annually a proclamation encouraging all public schools and educational institutions to observe Persian Gulf War Veterans Day and to conduct exercises recognizing the contributions of all those involved in the Persian Gulf War and remembering the sacrifices they made for their country. The proclamation may not mandate a public school or educational institution to participate in the observance.

§ 1303. Global War on Terrorism Veterans Day.

(a) Legislative findings and declarations.--The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

(1) America's conflict in Afghanistan began in 2001 and became our country's longest military conflict.

(2) Following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the United States demanded that the Taliban regime stop harboring Al Qaeda, the terrorist organization responsible for the 9/11 attacks, and hand over the Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.

(3) President George W. Bush ordered United States Armed Forces to begin Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) to combat terrorism in Afghanistan and confront Al Qaeda.

(4) United States Armed Forces first entered Afghanistan and began combat operations on October 7, 2001.

(5) On May 2, 2011, Osama bin Laden was killed during the fighting after President Barack Obama ordered Navy SEALs to raid Osama bin Laden's compound.

(6) On December 31, 2014, the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) combat operations in Afghanistan officially ended.

(7) Since the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom, over 830,000 Americans, including 18,000 from this Commonwealth, have served in Afghanistan.

(8) More than 2,000 members of the United States Armed Forces, including 98 from this Commonwealth, were killed in action in Afghanistan since combat began.

(9) More than 19,000 members of the United States Armed Forces were wounded in service to their country during Operation Enduring Freedom.

(10) When Operation Enduring Freedom ended, the United States began a new phase of the campaign, named Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS).

(11) United States Armed Forces remain in the country to participate in a coalition mission to train, advise and assist Afghan National Defense and Security Forces and to conduct counterterrorism operations against the remnants of Al Qaeda.

(12) During Operation Freedom's Sentinel more than 70 Americans have lost their lives and another 453 have been wounded in action.

(13) On March 19, 2003, President George W. Bush announced the beginning of combat operations in Iraq after Saddam Hussein failed to meet the demands of the United States.

(14) Operation Iraqi Freedom lasted for more than seven years, reducing the influence of insurgents, stopping sectarian violence, assisting in training the Iraq Security

Forces and promoting the development of Iraq's constitution and elections.

(15) Major United States combat operations ended on September 1, 2010. American troops remained in the country to advise Iraqi Security Forces as part of Operation New Dawn until the withdrawal on December 15, 2011.

(16) More than 4,000 members of the United States Armed Forces lost their lives during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn, including 197 from this Commonwealth, and more than 32,000 were wounded.

(17) With the rise of the terrorist group known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the United States created a new combined joint task force in 2014, dubbed Operation Inherent Resolve.

(18) March 23, 2019, marked the end of ISIS controlling any physical territory in Syria and Iraq.

(19) United States Armed Forces under Operation Inherent Resolve continue to work by, with and through local partners to defeat the final ISIS force and stabilize the region.

(20) The fight against ISIS under Operation Inherent Resolve has claimed more than 80 American lives, with another 80 wounded in action.

(21) United States military personnel have served domestically securing key infrastructure and supporting overseas operations.

(22) Since September 11, 2001, members of the United States military have served on nearly every continent fighting international terrorism.

(b) Designation.--October 7 of each year is designated as Global War on Terrorism Veterans Day.

(c) Proclamation.--The Governor shall issue annually a proclamation encouraging all public schools and educational institutions to observe Global War on Terrorism Veterans Day and to conduct exercises recognizing the contributions of all those involved in the Global War on Terrorism and remembering the sacrifices they made for their country. The proclamation may not mandate a public school or educational institution to participate in the observance.

CHAPTER 15

FIRST RESPONDERS RECOGNITION

Sec.

1501. Definitions (Reserved).

1502. First Responders Day.

§ 1501. Definitions (Reserved).

§ 1502. First Responders Day.

(a) Legislative findings and declarations.--The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

(1) Our first responders, who are police, fire, emergency medical services (EMS) and public health personnel, work selflessly on behalf of the people of this Commonwealth, regardless of the risk or hazard, and truly are citizens serving the community.

(2) Most Pennsylvanians have benefited in some way from the courageous service of first responders across this Commonwealth.

(3) First responders carry out the critical role of protecting and ensuring public safety in emergency situations.

(4) The men and women who bravely serve as first responders have found themselves on the front lines of homeland defense in the war against terrorism.

(5) First responders are called upon in the event of natural disasters, such as hurricanes, tornadoes, flooding and pandemics.

(6) More than 100,000 first responders perform these crucial services in this Commonwealth.

(7) Approximately 30,000 sworn police officers from State, city and county law enforcement agencies protect lives and property, detect and prevent crimes, uphold the law and ensure justice.

(8) Tens of thousands of firefighters, including approximately 50,000 volunteers and 10,000 career firefighters, provide fire suppression, EMS, search and rescue, hazardous materials response, terrorism response and critical fire prevention and safety education.

(9) Approximately 60,000 emergency services professionals in this Commonwealth respond to and treat a variety of life-threatening emergencies, from cardiac and respiratory arrest to traumatic injuries.

(10) First responders make personal sacrifices to protect our communities, as witnessed in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and of the natural destruction caused by Hurricanes Katrina, Irene and Sandy. They are called every day to protect individuals and property in cities and towns across this Commonwealth.

(11) Many law enforcement officers die in the line of duty in the United States each year, including nine killed in 2020 in Pennsylvania alone.

(12) More than 100 firefighters are killed in the line of duty across the United States each year and thousands more are injured.

(13) EMS answers more than 20 million patient calls every year, and many medics are injured on the job, have been assaulted by patients or have been exposed to infectious diseases.

(14) EMS personnel in the United States have a fatality rate of more than twice the national average for all other workers.

(15) Thousands of first responders have made the ultimate sacrifice.

(16) These men and women, by their dedicated professionalism, have earned our gratitude and respect.

(b) First Responders Day.--The following apply:

(1) September 27 of each year is designated as First Responders Day.

(2) The Governor shall issue annually a proclamation calling upon all public schools and educational institutions to observe First Responders Day and to conduct exercises recognizing the contributions and remembering the sacrifices that first responders have made.

(3) First Responders Day may not be a paid holiday or a day that school districts close.

Section 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

APPROVED--The 17th day of November, A.D. 2021.

TOM WOLF