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Commemorative Days, Weeks, and Months: Background and Current Practice

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Summary

Typically, each Congress, hundreds of legislative measures are introduced to recognize, support, honor, or acknowledge certain days, weeks, and months. Some scholars have observed that commemorative legislation has universal and patriotic appeal and also provides an opportunity to connect directly with constituents, which can help fulfill representational responsibilities to Members' districts or states.

Often used to commemorate an individual, group, or event, these measures can be divided into three categories: (1) federal holidays; (2) patriotic and national observances; and (3) recognition of a specific day, week, or month that commemorates a specific individual, group, or event. To create either a federal holiday or a patriotic or national observance, a law is required. Action to recognize, support, honor, or acknowledge certain days, weeks, and months, however, requires only a simple resolution agreed to by the House or Senate, or a concurrent resolution agreed to by both chambers.

While historically common for Congress to recognize a day, week, or month, this practice has become rarer since the adoption of House Rule XII, clause 5, in the 104th Congress (1995-1996). Since that time, the number of commemorative resolutions introduced and considered in the House has declined. This rule, however, does not apply to the Senate, where date-specific commemorative legislation is still introduced and considered.

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Introduction

Each Congress, hundreds of measures are introduced to recognize, support, honor, or acknowledge individuals, groups, and events with a national day, week, or month of recognition. As scholars Lawrence Dodd and Scot Schraufnagel observed, "this type of legislation generally has universal appeal with patriotism, altruism, and other worthy concerns ... [as] the motivation behind the legislation."[1] These measures serve as one way that Members of Congress can fulfill their representational responsibilities and connect with their constituents.[2] This type of legislation can be divided into three categories: federal holidays; patriotic and national observances; and recognition of a specific day, week, or month to commemorate a specific individual, group, or event.

Federal holidays, which are often referred to as "national holidays," are created by law and are legally only applicable to the federal government and the District of Columbia. Most federal government offices are closed for the day—many states also acknowledge and participate in the celebration.

Statutory observances, by contrast, which are often called patriotic or national observances, are found codified at 36 U.S.C. §§101-144, and do not provide specific time off for federal employees or the District of Columbia. Currently there are 44 patriotic or national observances. These include days for

- individuals (e.g., Wright Brothers, Leif Erikson, and Stephen Foster);
- groups (e.g., Mother's Day, and Peace Officers);
- events (e.g., Patriot Day [9/11], Korean War Veterans Armistice Day, and signing the Constitution); and
- other recognitions (e.g., Flag Day, Poison Prevention, and Heart Month).

New statutory observances can only be created by enacting a law.

The other type of commemorative period recognizes a special day, week, or month. Most often these are introduced as a simple resolution (H.Res. or S.Res.) or as a concurrent resolution (H.Con.Res. or S.Con.Res.).

This report provides information on commemorative legislation that recognizes a specific time period, and then it discusses options for Congress. First, the report summarizes the different types of commemorative time periods—federal holidays; patriotic and national observances; and commemorative days, weeks, and months. Second, it discusses the current rules in the House and Senate that govern this type of legislation. Finally, the report discusses options for Congress, including introducing legislation in the House and Senate, and asking the President to issue a proclamation.

Commemorative Time Periods

Permanent commemorative time periods are authorized by law to commemorate groups, individuals, and events. Broadly, these *permanent* commemorations can be divided into two

[1] Lawrence C. Dodd and Scot Schraufnagel, "Re-Thinking Legislative Productivity: Commemorative Legislation and Policy Gridlock," *Congress & The Presidency*, vol. 36, no. 2 (2009), p. 133.

[2] Roger H. Davidson, Walter J. Oleszek, Frances E. Lee, and Eric Schickler, *Congress and Its Members, 15th edition* (Washington: CQ Press, 2016), p. 456.

categories: Federal holidays and patriotic and national observances. Nonpermanent recognitions of commemorative days, weeks, and months can be authorized through the use of simple or concurrent resolutions.

Federal Holidays

The United States has established 11 permanent federal holidays.[3] They are, in the order they appear in the calendar, New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday, Inauguration Day (every four years, following a presidential election), George Washington's Birthday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.[4] Although frequently called public or national days, these celebrations are only legally applicable to the federal government and the District of Columbia, as the states individually decide their own legal holidays.

To create a new federal holiday, a law is required. In recent Congresses, legislation has been introduced that would have created holidays such as "Cesar E. Chavez Day,"[5] or to formally establish Election Day as a federal holiday.[6] None of these recent proposals has been adopted.

Patriotic and National Observances

Since 1914, Congress has authorized 44 patriotic and national observances. Codified in Title 36, *United States Code,* these patriotic and national observances include days for individuals,[7] groups,[8] events,[9] and other commemorations.[10]

New patriotic and national observances can only be created statutorily. In recent Congresses, for example, legislation has been introduced to designate March 29 as Vietnam Veterans Day to honor and recognize "the contributions of veterans who served in the United States Armed Forces in Vietnam during war and during peace."[11]

For a complete list of patriotic and national observances, see the **Appendix**.

Recognition or Support of a Commemorative Day, Week, or Month

In addition to statutory federal holidays and patriotic and national observances, Congress has historically considered legislation that recognizes, supports, honors, or acknowledges certain

[3] For more information on federal holidays, see CRS Report R41990, *Federal Holidays: Evolution and Current Practices*, by Jacob R. Straus.

[4] 5 U.S.C. §6103(a).

[5] For example, see H.J.Res 356 (103rd Congress).

[6] For an example, see H.R. 62 (107th Congress), which would have amended Title 5, *United States Code*, "to establish election day in Presidential election years as a legal public holiday...."

[7] Patriotic and national observances that celebrate individuals include, for example, the Wright Brothers (§143), Leif Erikson (§114), and Stephen Foster (§140).

[8] Observances that celebrate groups include, for example, Mother's Day (§117) and Peace Officers (§136).

[9] Observances that celebrate events include, for example, Patriot Day [9/11] (§144), Korean War Veterans Armistice Day (§127), and the signing the Constitution (§106 and §108).

[10] Observances that celebrate items include, for example, Flag Day (§110), Poison Prevention Week (§130), and Heart Month (§101).

[11] S. 409 (113th Congress), introduced February 28, 2013.

days, weeks, and months. For example, in the 114th Congress, the Senate agreed to a resolution "designating the week of May 10 through May 16, 2015 as 'National Police Week.'"[12]

Usually introduced as a simple resolution (H.Res. or S.Res.), these commemorative measures provide recognition by one congressional chamber of individuals, groups, and events without creating a new federal holiday or permanent patriotic and national observance.[13]

Congressional Rules on Commemorative Legislation

For the House, rules ban the introduction and consideration of date-specific commemorative legislation. In the Senate, no specific chamber rules exist on either the introduction or consideration of commemorative measures.

House

In the 104th Congress (1995-1996), the House adopted a new standing rule to reduce the number of commemorative bills and resolutions introduced and considered by the chamber. House Rule XII, clause 5, prohibits the introduction and consideration of date-specific commemorative legislation. In addition, Republican Conference Rule 28 prohibits the Republican leader from scheduling commemorative legislation for floor consideration under suspension of the rules; a committee rule of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee also addresses scheduling of such legislation under suspension of the rules.[14]

House Rule XII, Clause 5

As part of the rules adopted by the 104th Congress,[15] House Rule XII was amended to preclude the introduction or consideration of any bill, resolution, or amendment that "establishes or expresses any commemoration." The rule, which has been readopted each Congress since 1995,[16] defines a commemoration as any "remembrance, celebration, or recognition for any purpose through the designation of a specified period of time." Further, in the House Rules Committee's section-by-section analysis of the House Rules resolution (H.Res. 6) in the 104th Congress, the following explanation was provided on the rule's intent:

> The new ban on date-specific commemorative measures or amendments applies to both the introduction and consideration of any measure containing such a commemorative. This is intended to include measures in which such a commemorative may only be incidental to the overall purpose of the measure. Such measures will be returned to the sponsor if they are dropped in the legislative hopper. The prohibition against consideration also extends to any measures received from the Senate which contain date-specific commemorative [sic]. While it does not block their receipt from the other body, it is intended that such measures would not be referred to the appropriate committee of the House or be considered by the

[12] S.Res. 177 (114th Congress), agreed to May 11, 2015.

[13] Simple resolutions can only be considered in the chamber in which they were introduced. Therefore, the Senate cannot act on a House resolution (H.Res.) and the House cannot act on a Senate resolution (S.Res.).

[14] For more information on suspension of the rules procedures see, CRS Report 98-314, *Suspension of the Rules in the House: Principal Features*, by Elizabeth Rybicki.

[15] "Ban on Commemoratives," *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 141 (January 4, 1995), pp. H29-H30.

[16] H.Res. 5 (115th Congress), agreed to January 3, 2017. Also see, "Rules of the House," *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 163 (January 3, 2017), p. H7.

> House. Instead, they would simply be held at the desk without further action. Should such a commemorative be included in a conference report or Senate amendment to a House bill, the entire conference report or Senate amendment would be subject to a point of order.
>
> While the ban does not apply to commemorative [sic] which do not set aside a specified period of time, and instead simply call for some form of national recognition, it is not the intent of the rule that such alternative forms should become a new outlet for the consideration of such measures. Thus, while they could be referred to an appropriate committee, it is not expected that such committees should feel obligated or pressured to establish special rules for their release to the House floor. Nor should it be expected that the Rule [sic] Committee should become the new avenue for regular waivers of the rule against date specific commemorative [sic]. Such exceptions should be limited to those rare situations warranting special national recognition as determined by the Leadership.[17]

House Republican Conference Rule 28

The House Republican Conference rules (Rule 28 (6)) prohibit the Republican leader from scheduling "any bill or resolution for consideration under suspension of the Rules which ... expresses appreciation, commends, congratulates, celebrates, recognizes the accomplishments of, or celebrates the anniversary of, an entity, event, group, individual, institution, team or government program; or acknowledges or recognizes a period of time for such purposes."[18]

Additionally, the House majority party leadership has issued protocols "intended to guide the majority leadership in the scheduling and consideration of legislation on the House floor." Included in the protocols is guidance on possible exceptions to Conference Rule 28.

> A resolution of bereavement, or condemnation, or which calls on others (such as a foreign government) to take a particular action, but which does not otherwise violate the provisions of Rule 28 is eligible to be scheduled under suspension of the Rules.[19]

Party conference rules and protocols, however, are not enforceable by points of order on the House floor, though they may reflect a general reluctance on the part of the majority party to schedule any legislation with commemorative intent.

In addition, in the 115th Congress, the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (which has jurisdiction over holidays and celebrations) adopted a new committee rule. Its Rule 13(c) states,

> The Chairman shall not request to have scheduled any resolution for consideration under suspension of the Rules, which expresses appreciation, commends, congratulates, celebrates, recognizes the accomplishments of, or celebrates the anniversary of, an entity,

[17] "Rules of the House," *Congressional Record*, vol. 141, part 1 (January 4, 1995), p. 476.

[18] U.S. Congress, House Republican Conference, "Conference Rules." Pursuant to Rule 28(b), "a waiver of this rule can be granted by the majority of the Elected Leadership as defined under [Republican Conference] Rule 2." The elected leadership of the Republican Conference is defined in Rule 2(a) of the Conference Rules to include the Speaker of the House, the Republican Leader, the Republican Whip, the Chair of the Republican Conference, the Chair of the National Republican Congressional Committee, the Chair of the Committee on Policy, the Vice-Chair of the Republican Conference, and the Secretary of the Republican Conference. A copy of the House Republican Conference Rules can be found at https://www.gop.gov/115th-rules/.

[19] U.S. Congress, House Committee on Rules, "General Protocols for the 115th Congress," at http://rules.house.gov/sites/republicans.rules.house.gov/files/115/PDF/115-Protocols-Post.pdf; and U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Office of the Majority Leader, "Floor Protocols," at http://www.majorityleader.gov/protocols.

> event, group, individual, institution, team or government program; or acknowledges or recognizes a period of time for such purposes.[20]

In the past, the committee has issued additional guidance that "in accordance with the intent of this [House] rule, it will be the policy of the Committee that resolutions deemed to fit these criteria shall not be considered by the Committee."[21]

Past Waiver of House Rule XII

Since House Rule XII, clause 5, was adopted in the 104th Congress, it has been explicitly waived on at least one occasion. Specifically, the "House by unanimous consent waived the prohibition against introduction of a certain joint resolution specified by sponsor and title proposing a commemoration"[22] to allow for the consideration of H.J.Res. 71 (107th Congress), legislation establishing Patriot Day as a day of remembrance for September 11, 2001.[23]

Senate

Unlike in the House, no Senate rules exist that would prohibit the introduction or consideration of commemorative measures. In the past, the Senate Judiciary Committee has had unpublished guidelines on the consideration of commemorative legislation. These guidelines were not officially part of the committee's rules. Past guidance restricted consideration of commemorative legislation without a minimum number of bipartisan cosponsors, and prohibited commemoration of specific categories.[24]

Data on Commemorative Legislation

While the House prohibits the introduction and consideration of date-specific commemorative legislation, House resolutions to achieve a similar purpose continue to be introduced. These resolutions do not include a specific time period after the resolution's resolving clause.[25] Consequently, the introduction of such a measure does not appear to violate House Rule XII, clause 5. Data on all measures used to propose recognition of a commemorative period were collected for the 113th and the 114th Congresses. A total of 915 commemorative measures were

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[20] U.S. Congress, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, "Rules of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, U.S. House of Representatives, 115th Congress," at https://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/OGR-Cmte-Rules-115-FINAL.pdf#page=8.

[21] U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, "OGR Committee Policies on Post Office Namings and Commemorative Resolutions," Dear Colleague Letter, March 16, 2015.

[22] U.S. Congress, House, *Constitution, Jefferson's Manual, and Rules of the House of Representatives of the United States, One Hundred Fourteenth Congress*, prepared by Thomas J. Wickham, parliamentarian, 115th Cong., 2nd sess., H.Doc. 113-181 (Washington: GPO, 2015), §823, p. 623.

[23] "Authorizing Introduction of Joint Resolution Designating September 11 as United We Stand Remembrance Day," *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 147 (October 24, 2001), p. H.7300; and "Making in Order on Thursday, October 25, 2001, Consideration of Joint Resolution Designating September 11 as United We Stand Remembrance Day," *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 147 (October 24, 2001), p. H7300.

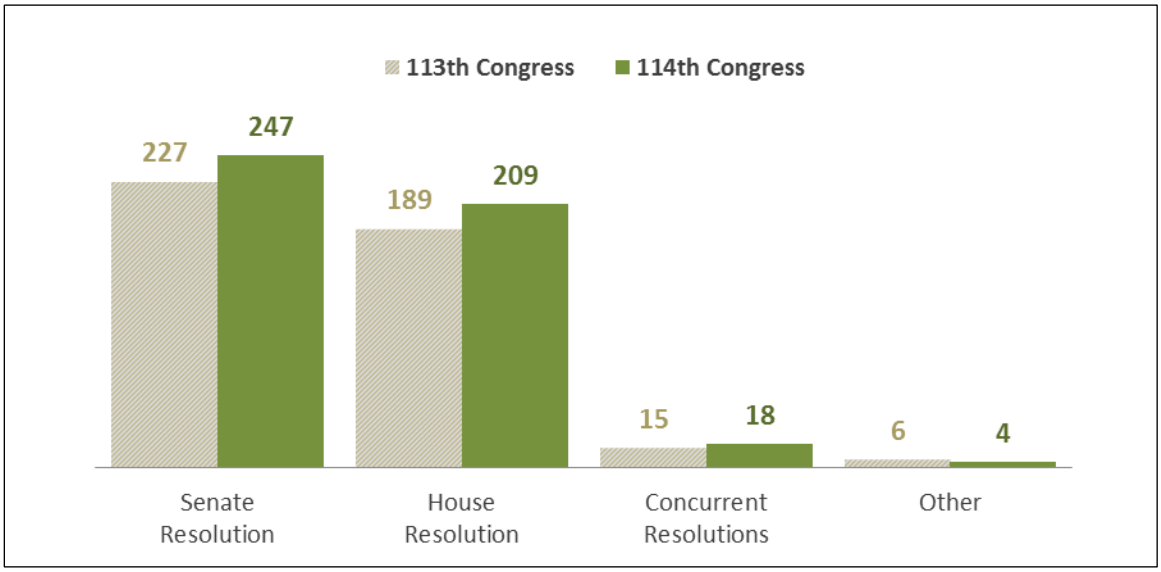
[24] U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on the Judiciary, "Committee Policy for the Consideration of Commemorative Measures: 106th Congress (unpublished)." Categories for which the committee did not consider requests for commemorations included a commercial enterprise, industry, or specific product, or a fraternal, political, business, labor, or sectarian organization; a particular state or any political subdivision of a state, city, town, county, school, or institution of higher learning; or a living person.

[25] The resolving clause is the opening language of a resolution, beginning "*Resolved*, That the House of Representatives [Senate]..." For more information, see Walter Kravitz, *Congressional Quarterly's American Congressional Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Washington: CQ Press, 2001), pp. 89, 217-218.

identified, 437 in the 113th Congress and 478 in the 114th Congress. **Figure 1** shows the types of legislation used to introduce commemorative recognitions in the House, and also in the Senate (where no rules regarding the introduction of commemorative resolutions exist), during the 113th and 114th Congresses.

Figure 1. Types of Legislation Used to Propose Commemorative Periods

113th and 114th Congresses (2013-2016)



Source: CRS analysis of commemorative legislation in the 113th and 114th Congresses using the Legislative Information System (LIS; http://www.lis.gov) or http://www.congress.gov.

Notes: "Other" includes the introduction of one House Joint Resolution (H.J.Res.), two Senate Joint Resolutions (S.J.Res.), and three bills (H.R. or S.) in the 113th Congress and two House Joint Resolutions and three bills in the 114th Congress.

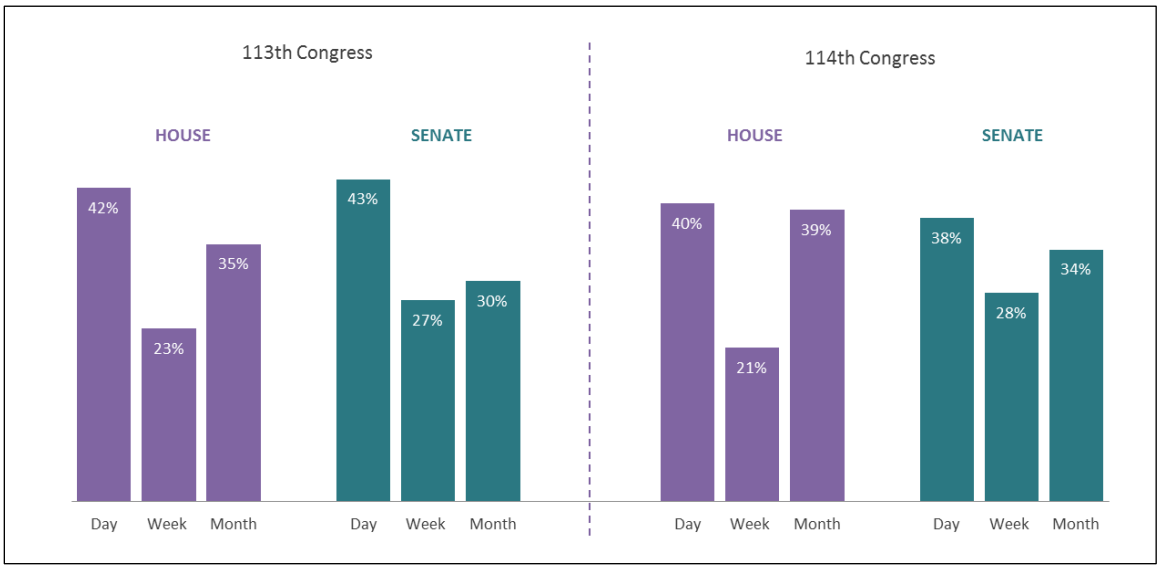
As **Figure 1** shows, the majority of commemorative measures were introduced as simple resolutions (95%) over the two congresses. A small number are measures that would need both House and Senate approval. These include concurrent resolutions (4%)—which do not require presidential action—or bills and joint resolutions (less than 1%). By using a simple resolution to designate a commemorative day, week, or month, only one chamber—either the House or Senate—can agree to the measure. A simple resolution, however, does not carry the force of law and can only be used by one chamber to recognize, support, honor, or acknowledge a specific day, week, or month.

Of the commemorative legislation introduced in the 113th and 114th Congresses, approximately 40% of all measures would recognize a commemorative day. This compares with approximately 25% for a commemorative week, and approximately 30% for a commemorative month. Additionally, a small percentage of legislation (3%) would designate two time periods. For example, H.Res. 407 (113th Congress) would "support the goals and ideals of National Adoption Day and National Adoption Month."[26] A measure that would designate two time periods is counted twice in the data. **Figure 2** shows the percentage of measures introduced that recognize a day, week, or month.

[26] H.Res. 407 (113th Congress), introduced November 12, 2013.

Figure 2. Percentage of Introduced Legislation to Commemorate Days, Weeks, and Months, by Chamber

113th and 114th Congresses (2013-2016)



Source: CRS analysis of commemorative legislation in the 113th and 114th Congresses.

In the 113th and 114th Congresses, a total of 915 commemorative measures were introduced, 433 in the House and 482 in the Senate. Of these measures, 401 of 474 (85%) Senate simple resolutions (S.Res.) were agreed to, with another two reported by Senate committees. Additionally, one Senate concurrent resolution (S.Con.Res.) and one bill (S.) were agreed to by the Senate. In the House, one measure (H.Res. 842 [114th Congress]) was agreed to.[27] All other House measures (397 simple resolutions [H.Res.], 30 concurrent resolutions [H.Con.Res.], 3 joint resolution [H.J.Res.], and 2 bills [H.R.]) that were introduced were referred to committee, but none were agreed to. **Table 1** shows the final disposition within the chamber of introduced commemorative measures in the 113th and 114th Congresses.

Table 1. Commemorative Legislation Final Status

113th and 114th Congresses (2013-2016)

	Senate Measures		House Measures	
Final Status	**113th Congress**	**114th Congress**	**113th Congress**	**114th Congress**
Referred to Committee (No Further Action)	38	39	204	228
Reported by Committee (No Further Action)	2	0	0	0
Agreed to	193	210	0	1

[27] H.Res. 842 (114th Congress), was agreed to on September 9, 2016. The resolution expressed the sense of the House that September 11 should be recognized as a day of solemn commemoration and extends "deepest sympathies to the innocent victims of the September 11, 2001" attacks. The resolution was considered following a unanimous consent request by the House Majority Leader to discharge the committee from consideration and consider it on the floor. The resolution was agreed to by voice vote. "Expressing the Sense of the House of Representatives Regarding the Terrorist Attacks Launched Against the United States on September 11, 2001, on the 15th Anniversary of that Date," *Congressional Record*, daily edition (September 9, 2016), pp. H5229-H5230.

Final Status	Senate Measures		House Measures	
	113th Congress	114th Congress	113th Congress	114th Congress
Total	**233**	**249**	**204**	**229**

Source: CRS analysis of commemorative legislation in the 113th and 114th Congresses.

Table 1 indicates that 83.6% of the Senate's measures and none of the House's measures were agreed to by the chamber of origin in the 113th Congress, and 85% of the Senate's measures and one of the House's measures were agreed to in the 114th Congress. As discussed above under "Congressional Rules on Commemorative Legislation," House and Senate rules for the consideration of date-specific commemorative legislation differ considerably. While the Senate allows such measures to be introduced and considered, the House has a rule that prohibits both the introduction and consideration of date-specific commemorative measures. Consequently, while no prohibition exists in the Senate, measures with date-specific provisions cannot be introduced in the House, but measures without date-specific provisions apparently can. Whether or not non-date-specific measures are considered in the future will likely be determined by scheduling practices of the House majority leader, which are guided by party conference rules and legislative protocols, as discussed earlier.[28]

Options for Congress

When Members of Congress engage in the legislative process, they do so for a variety of purposes.[29] In some cases, just the introduction of legislation achieves the Member's purpose, while in other cases the Member's purpose can only be achieved by the approval of a measure they have introduced. For example, the introduction of legislation may indicate that a Member would like to be involved in future public policy discussions in a particular area, or that he or she is attempting to frame the debate on a particular policy issue.[30]

In general, there are three stages where a Member might achieve his or her goal: the introduction of legislation, the consideration of a measure in the House or Senate, or passage of a measure by the House, Senate, or both. Should Congress want to commemorate a day, week, or month, several options might be available that might allow a Member to meet his or her goal within the confines of House or Senate rules. These include the introduction of a House measure or the introduction (and possible consideration) of a Senate measure.

Introduction of House Resolutions

Though House Rule XII, clause 5, prohibits the introduction or consideration of date-specific commemorative legislation, hundreds of commemorative resolutions that would honor a day,

[28] U.S. Congress, House Republican Conference, "Rules of the House Republican Conference for the 115th Congress," at http://www.gop.gov/115th-rules/, and U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Rules, "General Protocols for the 115th Congress," at http://rules.house.gov/sites/republicans.rules.house.gov/files/115/PDF/115-Protocols-Post.pdf.

[29] Davidson, Oleszek, Lee, and Schickler, *Congress and Its Members*, p. 206. Additionally, Members might take credit for their measures as it moves through the legislative process.

[30] Richard F. Fenno, *Senators on the Campaign Trail* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), pp. 245-259.

week, or month are introduced each Congress. None of these resolutions, however, has been considered by either a House committee or on the House floor.

Through an analysis of introduced resolutions, it appears they share a common trait: the lack of a specific date or time period after the resolving clause. Without a specific date or time period after the resolving clause, it appears that commemorative resolutions that support the recognition of a specific day, week, or month can be introduced. In these cases, the specific commemorative date is listed in the resolution's "whereas" clauses.[31] For example, in the 113th Congress, H.Res. 194 was introduced to express "support for designation of the month of May as Williams Syndrome Awareness Month."[32] The text of the resolution reads:

H.Res. 194 (113th Congress)

RESOLUTION

Expressing support for designation of the month of May as Williams Syndrome Awareness Month.

Whereas Williams syndrome is a rare genetic condition that is present at birth, affects as many as 30,000 individuals in the United States and is characterized by lifelong medical problems, including cardiovascular disease, developmental delays, and learning disabilities;

Whereas more than 5,000 individuals have signed a petition requesting that Congress support the Williams Syndrome Association's efforts to designate May as Williams Syndrome Awareness Month;

Whereas the Williams Syndrome Association (WSA), founded in 1982, is a non-profit organization and the most comprehensive resource for people and families living with Williams syndrome as well as for doctors, researchers and educators. And through its efforts, from raising public awareness, to funding critical new research, and providing valuable information and support to families, the WSA has improved the quality of life and futures of those affected by Williams syndrome;

Whereas to generate awareness about Williams syndrome and raise funding for critical WSA programs and initiatives, the WSA has organized May as Williams Syndrome Awareness Month which includes `Walks for Williams' and other events all across the United States; and

Whereas the Williams Syndrome Association and the families and friends of those with Williams should be commended for their hard work, compassion, and courage for educating the country about this rare disorder: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives supports the goals and ideals of Williams Syndrome Awareness Month.

H.Res. 194 was introduced without language that would apparently be prohibited by House Rule XII, clause 5. While introduction was likely allowed because the resolution specified a date only in the "whereas clauses," scheduling the measure under suspension proceedings was still likely circumscribed by Republican Conference Rule 28, clause 6, which guides the majority leader on the scheduling of legislation for floor consideration.

Senate Action

Currently, the Senate does not have any chamber-wide restriction on the introduction or scheduling of date-specific commemorative legislation. Therefore, Senate resolutions can contain a specific date in the text following the resolving clause (although this is not a requirement).[33] For

[31] "Whereas" clauses, which are also called preambles, are "introductory language describing the reasons for and intent of a measure." For more information, see Kravitz, *Congressional Quarterly's American Congressional Dictionary*, p. 182.

[32] H.Res. 194 (113th Congress), introduced April 26, 2013.

[33] For an example of a Senate resolution that does not include a specific date after the resolving clause, see S.Res. 79 (113th Congress), agreed to March 18, 2013.

example, S.Res. 131 (112th Congress) designated April 2011, as "Tsunami Awareness Month."[34] The text of the resolution read:

S.Res. 131 (112th Congress)

RESOLUTION

Designating April 2011 as 'Tsunami Awareness Month.'

Whereas a tsunami is a series of ocean or sea waves generated by a sea floor disturbance, such as an earthquake, landslide, volcanic eruption, or meteorite;

Whereas a tsunami could occur during any season and at any time;

Whereas a tsunami is a threat to life and property for all coastal communities, and tsunamis have caused serious injuries and millions of dollars in property damage in the United States;

Whereas the danger posed by a tsunami cannot be eliminated, but the impact of a tsunami can be mitigated through community preparedness, timely warnings, and effective response;

Whereas tsunamis historically have posed the greatest hazard to Hawaii, Alaska, California, Oregon, Washington, American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, tsunamis also pose risks to all ocean coasts of the United States;

Whereas Federal, State, and local officials have partnered to coordinate a national effort to reduce the impact of tsunamis through the National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program;

Whereas the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Weather Service operates 2 tsunami warning centers, the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center and the West Coast and Alaska Tsunami Warning Center, that detect potential tsunamis and issue warnings;

Whereas Tsunami Awareness Month provides an opportunity to highlight the importance of tsunami preparedness and to encourage the people of the United States to take steps to be better prepared for tsunamis at home, work, and school;

Whereas the people of the United States can prepare for tsunamis by finding out if their home, school, workplace or other frequently visited locations are in tsunami hazard areas, and by identifying evacuation routes; and

Whereas additional information about tsunami preparedness may be obtained through TsunamiReady at National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, at www.tsunamiready.noaa.gov: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates April 2011 as `Tsunami Awareness Month'; and

(2) encourages the Federal Government, States, localities, schools, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and other applicable entities, along with the people of the United States, to observe Tsunami Awareness Month with appropriate events and activities to promote tsunami preparedness.

Concluding Observations

Legislation that recognizes, supports, honors, or acknowledges certain days, weeks, and months continues to be introduced each Congress. In the 113th Congress (2013-2014), a total of 437 measures were introduced, 204 measures in the House and 233 in the Senate. The House did not consider any of these measures, while the Senate agreed to 193 of 233 (83%). In the 114th Congress, a total of 478 measures were introduced, 229 measures in the House and 249 in the Senate.

Based on the quantity of measures offered in both chambers, Members of Congress clearly see value in introducing commemorative legislation. While these measures generally may not be considered in the House, Members clearly desire ways to recognize commemorative days, weeks, and months to establish connections with their district and state.[35] The desire to recognize

[34] S.Res. 131 (112th Congress), agreed to April 5, 2011.

[35] Roger H. Davidson, "The New Centralization on Capitol Hill," *Review of Politics* vol. 50, no. 3 (Summer 1988), p. 354.

commemoration days, weeks, and months may explain why House Members draft their resolutions to allow for introduction, even though it seems that the intent of the prohibition (reinforced by the Republican Conference Rules) will likely preclude any further action on such resolutions.

Appendix. Patriotic and National Observances

Table A-1. Title 36 Patriotic and National Observances

Listed in Order of Enactment

Commemoration	Date of Enactment	Bill Number/Statute	Section of Title 36	Currently Designated Date(s)
Mother's Day	5/8/1914	63rd H.J. Res. 263, 38 Stat. 770	117	Second Sunday in May
Child Health Day	5/18/1928	70th H.J, Res. 184, 45 Stat. 617	105	First Monday in October
National Maritime Day	5/20/1933	73rd S.J. Res. 50, 48 Stat. 73	128	May 22nd
Columbus Day	4/30/1934	73rd H.J. Res. 10, 48 Stat. 657	107	Second Monday in October
Gold Star Mother's Day	6/23/1936	74th S.J. Res. 115, 49 Stat. 1895	111	Last Sunday in September
Thomas Jefferson's Birthday	8/16/1937	75th H.J. Res. 284, 50 Stat. 668	141	April 13th
Cancer Control Month	3/28/1938	75th H.J. Res.468, 52 Stat. 148	103	Month of April
National Aviation Day	5/11/1939	76th S.J. 111, 53 Stat. 739	118	August 19th
Pan American Aviation Day	10/10/1940	76th S.J. Res. 293, 54 Stat. 1093	134	December 17th
National Disability Employment Awareness Month	8/11/1945	79th H.J. Res. 23, 59 Stat. 530	121	Month of October
National Freedom Day	6/30/1948	P.L. 80-842, 62 Stat. 1150	124	February 1st
Flag Day	8/3/1949	P.L. 81-203, 63 Stat. 492	110	June 14th
Memorial Day	5/11/1950	P.L. 81-512, 64 Stat. 158	116	Last Monday in May
Stephen Foster Memorial Day	10/27/1951	P.L. 82-225, 65 Stat. 659	140	January 13th
Constitution Day and Citizenship Day	2/29/1952	P.L. 82-261, 66 Stat. 9	106	September 17th
National Day of Prayer	4/17/1952	P.L. 82-324, 66 Stat. 64	119	First Thursday in May
Constitution Week	8/2/1956	P.L. 84-915, 70 Stat. 932	108	September 17th -September 23rd
National Defense Transportation Day	5/16/1957	P.L. 85-32, 71 Stat. 30	120	Third Friday in May
National Safe Boating Week	6/4/1958	P.L. 85-445, 72 Stat. 179	131	Week ending on the last Friday before Memorial Day

Commemoration	Date of Enactment	Bill Number/Statute	Section of Title 36	Currently Designated Date(s)
Loyalty Day	7/18/1958	P.L. 85-529, 72 Stat. 369	115	May 1st
National Forest Products Week	9/13/1960	P.L. 86-753, 74 Stat. 898	123	Third Sunday in October
Law Day, USA	4/7/1961	P.L. 87-20, 75 Stat. 43	113	May 1st
National Poison Prevention Week	9/26/1961	P.L. 87-319, 75 Stat. 681	130	Third week in March
National Transportation Week	5/14/1962	P.L. 87-449, 76 Stat. 69	133	Week that includes the third Friday of May
Peace Officers Memorial Day	10/1/1962	P.L. 87-726, 76 Stat. 676	136	May 15th
Police Week	10/1/1962	P.L. 87-726, 76 Stat. 676	137	Week in which May 15th occurs
National School Lunch Week	10/9/1962	P.L. 87-780, 76 Stat. 779	132	Week beginning on the second Sunday in October
Wright Brothers Day	12/17/1963	P.L. 88-209, 77 Stat. 402	143	December 17th
Save Your Vision Week	12/30/1963	P.L. 88-242, 77 Stat. 629	138	First week in March
American Heart Month	12/30/1963	P.L. 88-255, 77 Stat. 843	101	Month of February
Leif Erikson Day	9/2/1964	P.L. 88-566, 78 Stat. 849	114	October 9th
White Cane Safety Day	10/6/1964	P.L. 88-628, 78 Stat. 1003	142	October 15th
National Flag Week	6/9/1966	P.L. 89-443, 80 Stat. 194	122	Week in which June 14th occurs
Steelmark Month	11/2/1966	P.L. 89-703, 80 Stat. 1099	139	Month of May
National Hispanic Heritage Month	9/17/1968	P.L.90-498, 82 Stat. 848	126	September 15th through October 15th
Father's Day	4/24/1972	P.L. 92-278, 86 Stat. 124	109	Third Sunday in June
Honor America Days	6/13/1975	P.L. 94-33, 89 Stat. 211	112	The 21 days from Flag Day through Independence Day
National Grandparents Day	9/6/1979	P.L. 96-62, 93 Stat. 410	125	First Sunday in September after Labor Day
Carl Garner Federal Lands Cleanup Day	8/27/1986	P.L. 99-402, 100 Stat. 910	104	First Saturday after Labor Day
Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month	10/23/1992	P.L. 102-450, 106 Stat. 2251	102	Month of May
National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day	8/23/1994	P.L. 103-308, 108 Stat. 1669	129	December 7th

Commemoration	Date of Enactment	Bill Number/Statute	Section of Title 36	Currently Designated Date(s)
Parents' Day	10/14/1994	P.L. 103-362, 108 Stat. 3465	135	Fourth Sunday in July
National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day	7/27/1995	P.L. 104-19, 109 Stat. 247	127	July 27th
Patriot Day	12/18/2001	P.L. 107-89, 115 Stat. 877	144	September 11th
Veterans Day Moment of Silence	10/7/2016	P.L. 114-240 130 Stat. 974	145	Veterans Day

Source: Compiled by CRS using the Statutes at Large and the *U.S. Code*.

a. The legislation authorizing National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day provides that "July 23 of each year until 2003 is National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day."

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