

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 248 Session of 2021

INTRODUCED BY PHILLIPS-HILL, MASTRIANO, DUSH, J. WARD, BARTOLOTTA, TARTAGLIONE, YAW, K. WARD, MARTIN, SCHWANK, ROBINSON, SCAVELLO, PITTMAN, AUMENT AND BROOKS, FEBRUARY 18, 2021

AS AMENDED ON SECOND CONSIDERATION, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, NOVEMBER 9, 2021

AN ACT

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

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

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

8 PART I

9 GENERAL PROVISIONS

10 (Reserved)

11 PART II

12 SPECIAL OBSERVANCES

13 Chapter

14 11. Preliminary Provisions (Reserved)

15 13. Veteran Recognition

16 15. FIRST RESPONDERS RECOGNITION

1 CHAPTER 11

2 PRELIMINARY PROVISIONS

3 (Reserved)

4 CHAPTER 13

5 VETERAN RECOGNITION

6 Sec.

7 1301. Scope of chapter.

8 1302. Persian Gulf War Veterans Day.

9 1303. Global War on Terrorism Veterans Day.

10 § 1301. Scope of chapter.

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

14 § 1302. Persian Gulf War Veterans Day.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

19 § 1303. Global War on Terrorism Veterans Day.

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

22 (1) ~~The campaign in Afghanistan, which is America's~~ <--
23 ~~longest conflict, began in 2001 and continues to this day.~~
24 AMERICA'S CONFLICT IN AFGHANISTAN BEGAN IN 2001 AND BECAME <--
25 OUR COUNTRY'S LONGEST MILITARY CONFLICT.

26 (2) Following the terrorist attacks on September 11,
27 2001, the United States demanded that the Taliban regime stop
28 harboring Al Qaeda, the terrorist organization responsible
29 for the 9/11 attacks, and hand over the Al Qaeda leader Osama
30 bin Laden.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

29 (12) During Operation Freedom's Sentinel more than 70
30 Americans have lost their lives and another 453 have been

1 wounded in action.

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

6 (14) "Operation Iraqi Freedom" lasted for more than
7 seven years, reducing the influence of insurgents, stopping
8 sectarian violence, assisting in training the Iraq Security
9 Forces and promoting the development of Iraq's constitution
10 and elections.

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

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

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

23 (18) March 23, 2019, marked the end of ISIS controlling
24 any physical territory IN SYRIA AND IRAQ.

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

29 (20) The fight against ISIS under "Operation Inherent
30 Resolve" has claimed more than 80 American lives, with

1 another 80 wounded in action.

2 (21) United States military personnel have served
3 domestically securing key infrastructure and support overseas
4 operation.

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

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

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

18 CHAPTER 15

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19 FIRST RESPONDERS RECOGNITION

20 SEC.

21 1501. DEFINITIONS (RESERVED).

22 1502. FIRST RESPONDERS DAY.

23 § 1501. DEFINITIONS (RESERVED).

24 § 1502. FIRST RESPONDERS DAY.

25 (A) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND DECLARATIONS.--THE GENERAL
26 ASSEMBLY FINDS AND DECLARES AS FOLLOWS:

27 (1) OUR FIRST RESPONDERS, WHO ARE POLICE, FIRE,
28 EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICE (EMS) AND PUBLIC HEALTH PERSONNEL,
29 WORK SELFLESSLY ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE OF THIS COMMONWEALTH,
30 REGARDLESS OF THE RISK OR HAZARD, AND TRULY ARE CITIZENS

1 SERVING THE COMMUNITY.

2 (2) MOST PENNSYLVANIANS HAVE BENEFITED IN SOME WAY FROM
3 THE COURAGEOUS SERVICE OF FIRST RESPONDERS ACROSS THIS
4 COMMONWEALTH.

5 (3) FIRST RESPONDERS CARRY OUT THE CRITICAL ROLE OF
6 PROTECTING AND ENSURING PUBLIC SAFETY IN EMERGENCY
7 SITUATIONS.

8 (4) THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO BRAVELY SERVE AS FIRST
9 RESPONDERS HAVE FOUND THEMSELVES ON THE FRONT LINES OF
10 HOMELAND DEFENSE IN THE WAR AGAINST TERRORISM.

11 (5) FIRST RESPONDERS ARE CALLED UPON IN THE EVENT OF
12 NATURAL DISASTERS, SUCH AS HURRICANES, TORNADOES, FLOODING
13 AND PANDEMICS.

14 (6) MORE THAN 100,000 FIRST RESPONDERS PERFORM THESE
15 CRUCIAL SERVICES IN THIS COMMONWEALTH.

16 (7) APPROXIMATELY 30,000 SWORN POLICE OFFICERS FROM
17 STATE, CITY AND COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES PROTECT LIVES
18 AND PROPERTY, DETECT AND PREVENT CRIMES, UPHOLD THE LAW AND
19 ENSURE JUSTICE.

20 (8) TENS OF THOUSANDS OF FIREFIGHTERS, INCLUDING
21 APPROXIMATELY 50,000 VOLUNTEERS AND 10,000 CAREER
22 FIREFIGHTERS, PROVIDE FIRE SUPPRESSION, EMS, SEARCH AND
23 RESCUE, HAZARDOUS MATERIALS RESPONSE, TERRORISM RESPONSE AND
24 CRITICAL FIRE PREVENTION AND SAFETY EDUCATION.

25 (9) APPROXIMATELY 60,000 EMERGENCY SERVICES
26 PROFESSIONALS IN THIS COMMONWEALTH RESPOND TO AND TREAT A
27 VARIETY OF LIFE-THREATENING EMERGENCIES, FROM CARDIAC AND
28 RESPIRATORY ARREST TO TRAUMATIC INJURIES.

29 (10) FIRST RESPONDERS MAKE PERSONAL SACRIFICES TO
30 PROTECT OUR COMMUNITIES, AS WITNESSED IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE

1 TERRORIST ATTACKS OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, AND OF THE NATURAL
2 DESTRUCTION CAUSED BY HURRICANES KATRINA, IRENE AND SANDY.
3 THEY ARE CALLED EVERY DAY TO PROTECT INDIVIDUALS AND PROPERTY
4 IN CITIES AND TOWNS ACROSS THIS COMMONWEALTH.

5 (11) MANY LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS DIE IN THE LINE OF
6 DUTY IN THE UNITED STATES EACH YEAR, INCLUDING NINE KILLED IN
7 2020 IN PENNSYLVANIA ALONE.

8 (12) MORE THAN 100 FIREFIGHTERS ARE KILLED IN THE LINE
9 OF DUTY ACROSS THE UNITED STATES EACH YEAR AND THOUSANDS MORE
10 ARE INJURED.

11 (13) EMS ANSWERS MORE THAN 20 MILLION PATIENT CALLS
12 EVERY YEAR, AND MANY MEDICS ARE INJURED ON THE JOB, HAVE BEEN
13 ASSAULTED BY PATIENTS OR HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO INFECTIOUS
14 DISEASES.

15 (14) EMS PERSONNEL IN THE UNITED STATES HAVE A FATALITY
16 RATE OF MORE THAN TWICE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE FOR ALL OTHER
17 WORKERS.

18 (15) THOUSANDS OF FIRST RESPONDERS HAVE MADE THE
19 ULTIMATE SACRIFICE.

20 (16) THESE MEN AND WOMEN, BY THEIR DEDICATED
21 PROFESSIONALISM, HAVE EARNED OUR GRATITUDE AND RESPECT.

22 (B) FIRST RESPONDERS DAY.--THE FOLLOWING APPLY:

23 (1) SEPTEMBER 27 OF EACH YEAR IS DESIGNATED AS "FIRST
24 RESPONDERS DAY."

25 (2) THE GOVERNOR SHALL ISSUE ANNUALLY A PROCLAMATION
26 CALLING UPON ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS
27 TO OBSERVE "FIRST RESPONDERS DAY" AND TO CONDUCT EXERCISES
28 RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS AND REMEMBERING THE SACRIFICES
29 THAT FIRST RESPONDERS HAVE MADE.

30 (3) "FIRST RESPONDERS DAY" MAY NOT BE A PAID HOLIDAY OR

1 A DAY THAT SCHOOL DISTRICTS CLOSE.

2 Section 2. This act shall take effect immediately.