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# Congressional Recognition of Commemorative Days, Weeks, and Months: Background and Current Practice

May 13, 2024

**Congressional Research Service**

<https://crsreports.congress.gov>

R48065



R48065

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## Congressional Recognition of Commemorative Days, Weeks, and Months: Background and Current Practice

In each Congress, Members typically introduce hundreds of legislative measures to recognize, support, honor, or acknowledge certain days, weeks, and months. Some scholars have observed that commemorative legislation may have wide 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 otherwise commemorates an individual, group, or event. Creating either a federal holiday or a patriotic or national observance requires the passage of a law, but action to recognize, support, honor, or acknowledge a specified day, week, or month generally requires only a simple resolution agreed to by the House or Senate, or a concurrent resolution agreed to by both chambers.

Though it is historically common for Congress to recognize a day, week, or month, this practice has become rarer in the House since the adoption of House Rule XII, clause 5, in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress (1995-1996). Since that time, the number of commemorative resolutions introduced and considered in the House has fluctuated. After House adoption of the rule there was also a shift in the type of legislative vehicle used to commemorate a time period from lawmaking vehicles in the 102<sup>nd</sup> and 103<sup>rd</sup> Congresses, to simple resolutions in the 104<sup>th</sup>-117<sup>th</sup> Congresses. The switch from lawmaking vehicles to resolutions has allowed the Senate to independently recognize time periods without the House's concurrence (or the need for the President to sign a bill or joint resolution into law). This rule, however, does not apply to the Senate, where no prohibition exists for the introduction or consideration of date-specific commemorative legislation.

Using research conducted in partnership with a Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University capstone class over the 2022-2023 academic year, this report presents an analysis of the introduction and consideration of date-specific commemorative legislation that recognizes a specified time period and discusses options for Congress. The research shows that following the adoption of House Rule XII, clause 5, there was initially a reduction in the number of introduced and considered date-specific measures.

First, the report summarizes the different types of commemorative time periods—federal holidays, patriotic and national observances, and other date-specific commemorations. 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 congressional requests for presidential proclamations.

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## Introduction

Each Congress, Representatives and Senators typically introduce hundreds of measures to recognize, support, honor, or acknowledge individuals, groups, and events with a national day, week, or month. Some scholars have suggested that these measures—broadly referred to as date-specific commemorative legislation—arguably have “universal appeal with patriotism, altruism, and other worthy concerns ... [as] the motivation behind the legislation.”<sup>1</sup> Introducing date-specific commemorative measures is one way that Members of Congress can fulfill their representational responsibilities and connect with their constituents.<sup>2</sup> Date-specific commemorative measures can be divided into two broad categories: permanent observances, which include federal holidays and patriotic and national observances; and temporary observances, which recognize a specific date (e.g., day, week, month, or year) to commemorate a specified individual, group, or event.

Federal holidays, often referred to as “national holidays,” are created by law and legally apply only to the federal government and the District of Columbia. Most federal government offices are closed on federal holidays. Many states also acknowledge and participate in the observances.<sup>3</sup>

Patriotic and national observances are codified at 36 U.S.C. §§101-148 and do not provide specific time off for federal employees or the District of Columbia. There are 48 patriotic or national observances. These include days for

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

New patriotic and national observances can only be created by enacting a law.

Temporary observances offer a one-time recognition of a special day, week, month, or year. Most often, these are introduced as a simple resolution (H.Res. or S.Res.) or a concurrent resolution (H.Con.Res. or S.Con.Res.).

This report provides information on temporary observances recognized through date-specific commemorative legislation and discusses options for Congress. First, the report summarizes the different types of commemorative time periods—federal holidays, patriotic and national observances, and temporary commemorations. Second, it discusses the current rules in the House and Senate that govern date-specific commemorative legislation. Finally, the report discusses options for Congress, including the introduction of legislation in the House and Senate, and congressional requests for presidential proclamations.

## Date-Specific Commemorative Time Periods

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

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

<sup>3</sup> For more information, see CRS Report R41990, *Federal Holidays: Evolution and Current Practices*, by Jacob R. Straus.

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

## **Permanent Commemorations**

Congress has created two types of permanent commemorations: federal holidays, and patriotic and national observances.

### **Federal Holidays**

The United States has 12 permanent federal holidays.<sup>4</sup> 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, Juneteenth National Independence Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.<sup>5</sup> Although frequently called public or national holidays, these celebrations are only legally applicable to the federal government and the District of Columbia, as the states individually decide their own legal holidays.

A law is required to create a new federal holiday. Most recently, P.L. 117-17 created Juneteenth National Independence Day (June 19) as a federal holiday.<sup>6</sup>

### **Patriotic and National Observances**

Since 1914, Congress has authorized 47 patriotic and national observances. Codified in Title 36, *U.S. Code*, these patriotic and national observances include days for individuals,<sup>7</sup> groups,<sup>8</sup> events,<sup>9</sup> and other commemorations.<sup>10</sup>

New patriotic and national observances can only be created by law. In recent years, for example, Congress permanently recognized October 1 as Choose Respect Day to encourage “proclamations, activities, and educational efforts in furtherance of changing the culture around the tolerance of violence against women.”<sup>11</sup> For a complete list of patriotic and national observances, see the **Appendix**.

## **Temporary Observances**

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

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<sup>4</sup> For more information on federal holidays, see CRS Report R41990, *Federal Holidays: Evolution and Current Practices*, by Jacob R. Straus.

<sup>5</sup> 5 U.S.C. §6103(a).

<sup>6</sup> P.L. 117-17, 135 Stat. 287 (2021). For more information on Juneteenth, see CRS Insight IN11697, *Juneteenth National Independence Day: A New Federal Holiday*, by Jacob R. Straus.

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

<sup>8</sup> Observances that celebrate groups include, for example, Mother’s Day (§117) and Peace Officers (§136).

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

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

<sup>11</sup> 36 U.S.C. §147.

certain days, weeks, and months. For example, in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Senate agreed to a resolution “designating the week of May 12 through May 18, 2019, as ‘National Police Week.’”<sup>12</sup>

Usually introduced as a simple resolution (H.Res. or S.Res.) or a concurrent resolution (H.Con.Res. or S.Con.Res.), these commemorative measures provide recognition by one congressional chamber (simple resolutions) or both the House and the Senate (concurrent resolutions) of individuals, groups, and events for a specific time period in a specified year without creating a new federal holiday or permanent patriotic and national observance.<sup>13</sup>

## Date-Specific Commemorative Legislation

Each Congress, Members typically introduce hundreds of commemorative bills and resolutions. Measures that seek to recognize a specified time period are one subset of commemorative legislation. Since the 102<sup>nd</sup> Congress, Representatives and Senators have introduced more than 9,300 date-specific commemorative measures. On average, 586 measures have been introduced in each Congress, with a high of 1,114 in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress (2009-2010) and a low of 85 in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress (1995-1996).<sup>14</sup>

Commemorative measures represent the pluralistic society envisioned in the *Federalist Papers*.<sup>15</sup> By recognizing and memorializing important historical figures, groups, and events, date-specific commemorative measures can be used to help establish collective memory and for Members to connect with constituents and fulfill representational responsibilities.

## Collective Memory

Commemorative legislation, including date-specific measures, can play a significant role in establishing a national collective memory. Collective memory, or shared experiences, allows groups to develop a common narrative and a sense of community.<sup>16</sup> As the national policymaking body, Congress is in a unique position to influence public sentiment. Historically, Congress has used commemorations to create commonalities and help “frame importance ... through the recognition and potential endorsement” of individual events and celebrations.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> S.Res. 209 (116<sup>th</sup> Congress), agreed to May 14, 2019.

<sup>13</sup> 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.). Neither simple nor concurrent resolutions are presented to the President for potential enactment.

<sup>14</sup> For more information about the methodology used in this report, please see the “Data on Commemorative Legislation” section below.

<sup>15</sup> Library of Congress, *Federalist Papers: Primary Documents in American History*, at <https://guides.loc.gov/federalist-papers/full-text>.

<sup>16</sup> Zehng Wang, *Memory Politics, Identity and Conflict: Historical Memory as a Variable* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2018), pp. 11-25.

<sup>17</sup> Jacob R. Straus and Jared C. Nagel, “Winning by Association: How Congress Uses Sports Commemorations,” in *Congress and the Politics of Sports: Homefield Advantage*, Colton Campbell and David Dulio, eds, pp. 39-60 (New York: Routledge, 2023), p. 44; and James V. Wertsch, “Collective Memory,” in *Memory in Mind and Culture*, Pascal Boyer and James V. Wertsch, eds., (New York: Cambridge Press, 2009), p. 120.

Commemorations, including the recognition of commemorative time periods,<sup>18</sup> have been used as mechanisms to create a national experience and recognize cultural significances.<sup>19</sup>

## Constituent Connections

Introducing commemorative legislation measures can signal shared values between Members of Congress and their constituents and help Members fulfill representational responsibilities. Date-specific commemorative legislation has become an important part of overall congressional commemorations. Members can use date-specific commemorative legislation to build and reinforce constituent connections by recognizing and celebrating constituent groups, causes, and issues important to the Member and to constituents.

Political scientist David Mayhew posited that Members work to ensure their reelection through their actions in Congress, including the representation of their constituents.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, Members may have incentives to introduce bills that signal the consideration of constituent interests and preferences. Date-specific commemorative legislation that recognizes events and milestones important to a district, state, or constituency is one such mechanism by which Members of Congress can try to represent those interests.<sup>21</sup>

## Congressional Rules on Commemorative Legislation

The House of Representatives and the Senate have different rules for the introduction and consideration of date-specific commemorative legislation. In the House, a chamber rule bans 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 of Representatives

In the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress (1995-1996), the House first adopted a rule to reduce the number of commemorative bills and resolutions introduced and considered by the chamber.<sup>22</sup> House Rule XII, clause 5, prohibits the introduction and consideration of date-specific commemorative

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<sup>18</sup> Other types of commemorations include stamps, memorials, and coins. For more information, see CRS Report R43539, *Commemorations in Congress: Options for Honoring Individuals, Groups, and Events*, by Jacob R. Straus et al.

<sup>19</sup> For example, see Barbara A. Biesecker, "Remembering World War II: The Rhetoric and Politics of National Commemoration at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, vol. 88, no. 4, (June 2002), pp. 393-409; and Hiro Saito, "From Collective Memory to Commemoration," *Singapore Management University* (2008), pp. 629-638.

<sup>20</sup> David R. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, Yale University Press (New Haven, CT: 1974), pp. 18-27; and John R. Wright, "Contributions, Lobbying, and Committee Voting in the U.S. House of Representatives," *American Political Science Review*, 84, no. 2 (1990), pp. 417-38. See also Kenneth Collier and Michael Munger, "A Comparison of Incumbent Security in the House and Senate," *Public Choice*, vol. 78, no. 2 (1994), pp. 145-54.

<sup>21</sup> Austin Bussing, "Majority Party Strategy and Suspension of the Rules in the House," *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, vol. 46, no. 4 (2021), pp. 921-959; Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, Matto Mildemberger, and Leah C. Stokes, "Legislative Staff and Representation in Congress," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 113, no. 1 (2019), pp. 1-18.

<sup>22</sup> For more information on the history of commemorative legislation, see CRS Report R43539, *Commemorations in Congress: Options for Honoring Individuals, Groups, and Events*, by Jacob R. Straus et al.



legislation.<sup>23</sup> In addition, the House majority party has rules and protocols to guide the House majority leader,<sup>24</sup> and some House committees have adopted policies to govern the consideration of date-specific commemorative legislation.

### House Rule XII, Clause 5

As part of the rules adopted by the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress,<sup>25</sup> House Rule XII was amended to preclude the introduction or consideration of any bill, resolution, or amendment that “establishes or expresses any commemoration.” The provision, which the rule continues to include, 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, 104<sup>th</sup> 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 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.<sup>26</sup>

#### House Rule XII, clause 5

Prohibition on commemorations

5. (a) A bill or resolution, or an amendment thereto, may not be introduced or considered in the House if it establishes or expresses a commemoration.

<sup>23</sup> U.S. Congress, House, “Rule XII, clause 5” *Rules of the House of Representatives One Hundred Eighteenth Congress*, p. 26, at <https://rules.house.gov/sites/republicans.rules118.house.gov/files/documents/Rules%20and%20Resources/118-House-Rules-Clerk.pdf#page=30>. See also U.S. Congress, House, “Rule XII, clause 5,” *Constitution, Jefferson’s Manual, and Rules of the House of Representatives of the United States one Hundred Seventeenth Congress*, prepared by Jason A. Smith, parliamentarian, 116<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 2021, H.Doc. 116-117 (Washington: GPO, 2021), §823, p. 648, at <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/HMAN-117/xml/HMAN-117-pg639.xml>.

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Congress, House, Majority Leader Steve Scalise, “118<sup>th</sup> Congress Floor Protocols,” at <https://www.majorityleader.gov/schedule/floor-protocols.htm>.

<sup>25</sup> “Ban on Commemoratives,” *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 141 (January 4, 1995), pp. H29-H30.

<sup>26</sup> “Rules of the House,” *Congressional Record*, vol. 141, part 1 (January 4, 1995), p. 476.

(b) In this clause the term “commemoration” means a remembrance, celebration, or recognition for any purpose through the designation of a specified period of time.<sup>27</sup>

The Republican Party holds the majority of House seats in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress (2023-2024) and therefore is responsible for scheduling floor action.<sup>28</sup> Consideration of commemorative legislation is therefore also effectively governed by the House Republican Conference rules. Conference Rule 29(a)(6) generally prohibits the Republican leader from scheduling certain commemorative bills and resolutions for floor consideration under suspension of the rules. The conference rule states:

**Rule 29—Guidelines on Suspension of the House Rules**

(a) The Republican Leader shall not schedule, or request to have scheduled, any bill or resolution for consideration under suspension of the Rules which—

...

(6) 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.<sup>29</sup>

While party rules are not enforceable by points of order on the House floor, the rule arguably reflects a reluctance on the part of the majority party to schedule legislation with commemorative intent. The majority party additionally provides protocols that “are intended to guide the Leadership in the scheduling and consideration of legislation on the House floor.”<sup>30</sup> Among other policies, for the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, the House majority leader’s protocols address commemorative legislation (see the text box below).

**Commemorative Resolutions**

**Purpose:**

This protocol provides further guidance for the adherence of Rule 29 of the Rules of the House Republican Conference which provides that: The Republican Leader shall not schedule, or request to have scheduled, 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...

**Protocol:**

<sup>27</sup> U.S. Congress, House, “Rule XII, clause 5” *Rules of the House of Representatives One Hundred Eighteenth Congress*, p. 26, at <https://rules.house.gov/sites/republicans.rules118.house.gov/files/documents/Rules%20and%20Resources/118-House-Rules-Clerk.pdf#page=30>.

<sup>28</sup> The Republican Party also held a majority of seats in the House between the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress (1995-1996) and 109<sup>th</sup> Congress (2005-2006) and between the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress (2011-2012) and the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress (2017-2018).

<sup>29</sup> U.S. Congress, House, Republican Conference, “Conference Rules of the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress,” at <https://www.gop.gov/conference-rules-of-the-118th-congress>. Another portion of the rule (Rule 29(b)) allows a waiver to be granted by a majority of the party’s elected leadership.

<sup>30</sup> U.S. Congress, House, Majority Leader Steve Scalise, “118<sup>th</sup> Congress Floor Protocols,” at <https://www.majorityleader.gov/schedule/floor-protocols.htm>.

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 29 is eligible to be scheduled under suspension of the Rules.<sup>31</sup>

Previous Congresses, under both Republican and Democratic majorities, have adopted similar protocols. For example, in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress (2021-2022), when the Democratic Party held a majority of seats in the House,<sup>32</sup> the majority leader's protocols stated

the Majority Leader shall not schedule any bill or resolution for consideration that 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.<sup>33</sup>

## Committee Rules

Since the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress (2015-2016), the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability (and its predecessors), which has jurisdiction over holidays and celebrations, has included in its committee rules provisions related to potential floor consideration of date-specific commemorative measures. For the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, Rule 13 states

(c) Resolutions. The Chair of the Committee 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, event, group, individual, institution, team or government program; or acknowledges or recognizes a period of time for such purposes.<sup>34</sup>

## Past Waivers of Rule XII

On at least one occasion, the “House by unanimous consent waived the prohibition against introduction of a certain joint resolution specified by sponsor and title proposing a commemoration”<sup>35</sup> to allow for the consideration of H.J.Res. 71 (107<sup>th</sup> Congress), legislation establishing Patriot Day as a day of remembrance for September 11, 2001.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>31</sup> U.S. Congress, House, Majority Leader Steve Scalise, “118<sup>th</sup> Congress Floor Protocols,” at <https://www.majorityleader.gov/schedule/floor-protocols.htm>.

<sup>32</sup> The Democratic Party also held a majority of seats in the House between the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress (2007-2008) and the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress (2009-2010) and in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress (2019-2020) and the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress (2021-2022).

<sup>33</sup> U.S. Congress, House, Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, “117<sup>th</sup> Congress Legislative Protocols,” <https://leaderarchive-hoyer.house.gov/content/117th-congress-legislative-protocols>. The 117<sup>th</sup> Congress protocols also stated that “A resolution of bereavement, or condemnation, or which calls on others to take a particular action, is eligible to be scheduled for consideration.”

<sup>34</sup> U.S. Congress, House Committee on Oversight and Accountability, “Rule 13—Consideration of Certain Bills and Resolutions,” *Committee on Oversight and Accountability 118<sup>th</sup> Congress*, 118<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., p. 7, at <https://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/118th-Committee-Rules.pdf#page=7>.

<sup>35</sup> U.S. Congress, House, *Constitution, Jefferson's Manual, and Rules of the House of Representatives of the United States, One Hundred Seventeenth Congress*, prepared by Jason A. Smith, parliamentarian, 116<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., H.Doc. 116-177 (Washington: GPO, 2021), §823, p. 648.

<sup>36</sup> “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.

## 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.<sup>37</sup>

## Data on Commemorative Legislation

In each Congress included in this analysis, Representatives and Senators have introduced date-specific commemorative legislation. In a number of cases, the House and/or Senate have considered some of these measures. To understand the evolution of the introduction and consideration of date-specific commemorative legislation, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) partnered with graduate students at the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University during the 2022-2023 academic year (September 2022 to May 2023) to collect and analyze data on date-specific commemorative measures.

Overall, through searches on Congress.gov for date-specific commemorative legislation, the Bush School students identified 9,324 date-specific commemorative measures introduced between the 102<sup>nd</sup> Congress (1991-1992) and the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress (2021-2022). The identified date-specific measures represented 3.3% of all legislative measures introduced in the House and Senate during this period.<sup>38</sup>

Although House Rule XII, clause 5, prohibits the introduction and consideration of date-specific commemorative legislation, legislation to achieve a similar purpose continues to be introduced in the chamber. These measures are mostly simple resolutions and generally do not include a specific time period after the resolution's resolving clause.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, the introduction of such a measure does not appear to violate House Rule XII, clause 5. **Figure 1** shows the number of date-specific commemorative measures, divided by type of legislation, introduced between the 102<sup>nd</sup> Congress and the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress.

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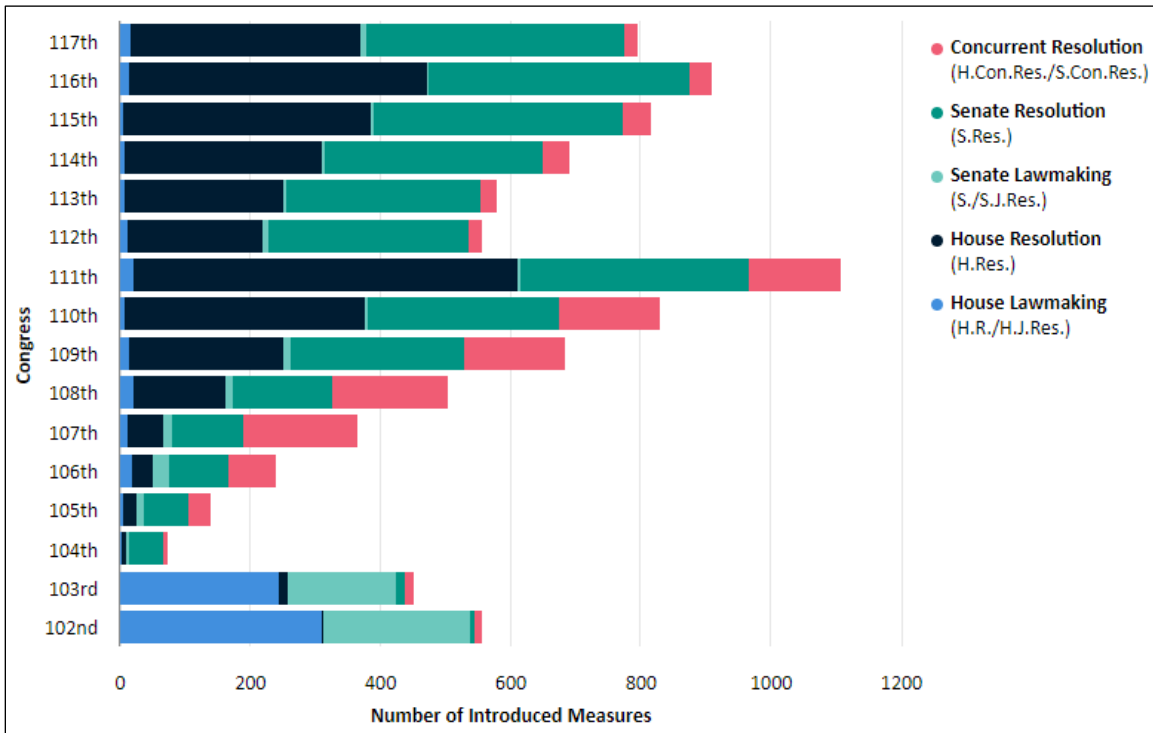
<sup>37</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on the Judiciary, "Committee Policy for the Consideration of Commemorative Measures: 106<sup>th</sup> Congress (unpublished)." Categories for which the committee did not consider requests for commemorations included a commercial enterprise, industry, or specific 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.

<sup>38</sup> Measures included in the analysis are bills (H.R. and S.), joint resolutions (H.J.Res. and S.J.Res.), concurrent resolutions (H.Con.Res. and S.Con.Res.), and simple resolutions (H.Res. and S.Res.).

<sup>39</sup> The resolving clause is the opening language of a resolution, beginning "*Resolved*, That the House of Representatives [Senate] ... ." For more information, see U.S. Congress, House, "Resolving Clauses," *House Practice: A Guide to the Rules, Precedents, and Procedures of the House*, prepared by Charles W. Johnson, John V. Sullivan, and Thomas J. Wickham, Jr., 115<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess. (Washington: GPO, 2017), §3, pp. 167-168, at <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-HPRACTICE-115/pdf/GPO-HPRACTICE-115.pdf#page=177>.

**Figure 1. Types of Legislation Used to Propose Commemorative Periods**  
 102<sup>nd</sup>-117<sup>th</sup> Congresses (1991-2022)

Figure is interactive in the HTML version of this report.



**Source:** CRS and Bush School analysis of commemorative legislation between the 102<sup>nd</sup> and the 117<sup>th</sup> Congresses using Congress.gov.

As **Figure 1** shows, the majority of date-specific commemorative measures were introduced as simple resolutions, especially since the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, the first Congress after the House adopted Rule XII, clause 5, to limit the number of date-specific measures introduced and considered. The data also show that in most Congresses Senate resolutions were introduced more frequently than House resolutions.

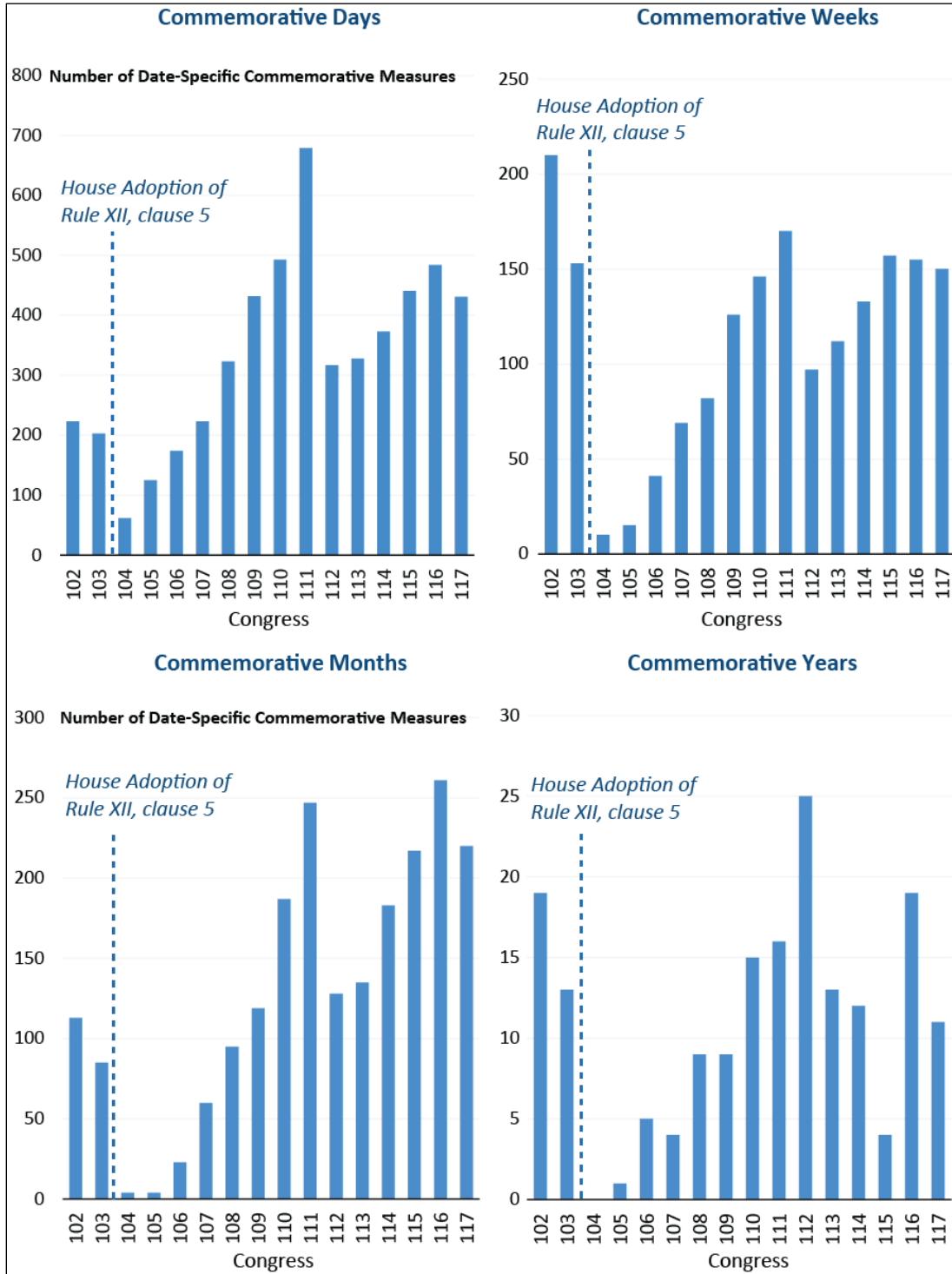
Prior to the House adoption of Rule XII, clause 5, most date-specific commemorative legislation was introduced as lawmaking vehicles (H.R., S., H.J.Res., and S.J.Res.). Beginning in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, the number of date-specific lawmaking vehicles declined, and the number of resolutions that required only one chamber’s approval (H.Res. and S.Res.) or both chambers’ approval but not presidential action (H.Con.Res. and S.Con.Res.) increased. Simple and concurrent resolutions, however, do not carry the force of law and cannot establish a permanent recognition of a specific date.

Of the date-specific commemorative legislation introduced between the 102<sup>nd</sup> and 117<sup>th</sup> Congresses, 56% of all measures would have recognized a commemorative day. This compares with 19% for a commemorative week, 22% for a commemorative month, 2% for a commemorative year, and less than 1% (a total of nine measures) that would have recognized a commemorative decade. Additionally, a small percentage of such legislation (<1%) would have designated more than one time period. For example, H.Res. 407 (113<sup>th</sup> Congress) would have supported “the goals and ideals of National Adoption Day and National Adoption Month.”<sup>40</sup> A

<sup>40</sup> H.Res. 407 (113<sup>th</sup> Congress), introduced November 12, 2013.

measure that would have designated two time periods is counted twice in the data. **Figure 2** shows the total number of measures introduced that would have recognized a day, week, month, or year.

**Figure 2. Number of Measures Introduced to Commemorate a Time Period**  
102<sup>nd</sup>-117<sup>th</sup> Congresses (1991-2022)

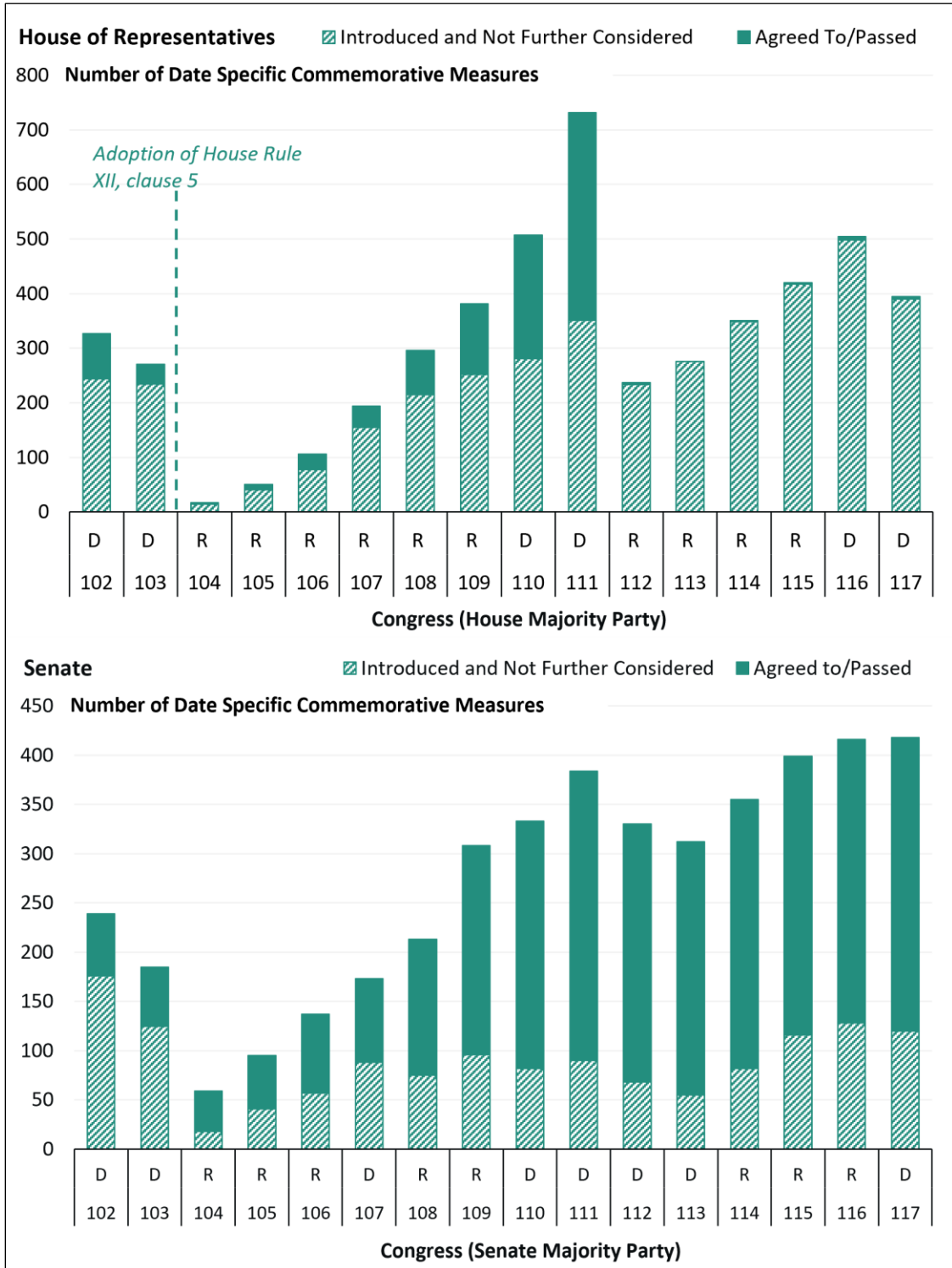


Source: CRS and Bush School analysis of commemorative legislation.

As noted above under “Congressional Rules on Commemorative Legislation,” House Rule XII, clause 5, prohibits House introduction or consideration of any bill, resolution, or amendment that “establishes or expresses a commemoration.” As such, since the rule was adopted at the start of the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, the number of measures considered in the House has generally decreased. At the same time, the number of measures considered by the Senate has generally increased over time. **Figure 3** shows the total number of date-specific commemorative measures by Congress for the House and the Senate, including the number of measures introduced and not further considered, as well as the number of measures agreed to or passed.



**Figure 3. Disposition of Date-Specific Commemorative Legislation**  
102<sup>nd</sup>-117<sup>th</sup> Congresses (1991-2022)



**Source:** CRS and Bush School analysis of commemorative legislation.

**Notes:** R = Republican Party majority; D = Democratic Party majority. In the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress (2001-2002), the Senate majority party shifted several times, as the result of a 50-50 partisan split following the November 2000

elections. Initially, the Democratic Party was in the majority (through January 20, 2001) with Vice President Al Gore as the President of the Senate. Following President George W. Bush's inauguration, the Republican Party was in the majority with Vice President Dick Cheney as the President of the Senate. In May 2001, Senator James Jeffords announced that he would leave the Republican Party, become an independent, and caucus with the Senate Democrats. As a result, the Democratic Party again became the Senate majority party. Following a November 2002 special election, the Republican Party returned to the majority when Democratic Senator Jean Carnahan was defeated by Republican Jim Talent. For more information, see U.S. Congress, Senate, "The Unforgettable 107<sup>th</sup> Congress," *About the Senate*, November 22, 2002, at <https://www.senate.gov/about/origins-foundations/parties-leadership/unforgettable-107th-congress.htm>.

**Figure 3** shows several trends. First, upon the adoption of House Rule XII, clause 5, in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, the number of date-specific commemorative measures introduced and the number agreed to or passed in the House declined. In the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, 17 date-specific commemorative measures were introduced in the House and 3 were agreed to or passed (18%). Comparatively, in the 102<sup>nd</sup> Congress, 327 commemorative measures were introduced in the House and 25% of those measures were agreed to or passed; and in the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 270 measures were introduced in the House and 13% were agreed to or passed.

Senate date-specific commemorative legislation also declined after the House adopted Rule XII, clause 5 in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, even though the rule does not apply in the Senate. In the 102<sup>nd</sup> Congress, 239 commemorative measures were introduced in the Senate and 26% were agreed to or passed; and in the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 185 measures were introduced and 32% were agreed to or passed. In the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, after the House rule's adoption, the number of measures introduced in the Senate declined to 59, with 69% agreed to or passed.

Second, **Figure 3** shows an increase in the number of date-specific measures both introduced and agreed to or passed between the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress and the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress in the House, despite Rule XII, clause 5, being included in the House rules each Congress. This suggests a potential change in the implementation or enforcement of the rule during that period.<sup>41</sup> CRS and Bush School capstone research did not identify a cause for the increase in introduced and agreed to/passed date-specific commemorative measures that began in the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress. The relative decline in the consideration of date-specific commemorative legislation beginning in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress appears to coincide with adoption of a conference rule and majority leader protocols in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress.<sup>42</sup>

Third, the data show that following the House's adoption of Rule XII, clause 5, the introduction of lawmaking vehicles (bills and joint resolutions) significantly decreased, while the use of simple resolutions increased (see **Figure 1**). In response to the House rule, in the following Congresses, Senators seemingly began to offer date-specific commemorative measures as simple resolutions, rather than as lawmaking vehicles. This change allowed the Senate to continue to recognize date-specific commemorations without requiring House concurrence, which was seemingly less likely because of the House rule.

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<sup>41</sup> A similar trend has also been found in other types of commemorative legislation. For example, one study found nearly the same pattern for commemorative legislation that honored sports teams and athletes, even though these were not date-specific measures. For more information, see Jacob R. Straus and Jared C. Nagel, "Winning by Association: How Congress Uses Sports Commemorations," in *Congress and the Politics of Sports: Homefield Advantage*, Colton Campbell and David Dulio, eds, pp. 39-60 (New York: Routledge, 2023), pp. 50-52.

<sup>42</sup> The limitation also exists in the Republican Conference rules for the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress (see "Congressional Rules on Commemorative Legislation" above for additional discussion).

## Options for Congress

Members of Congress engage in the legislative process for a variety of purposes.<sup>43</sup> In some cases, introducing legislation achieves the Member's purpose, whereas in other cases the Member can only achieve his or her purpose by gaining the approval of a measure. 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.<sup>44</sup>

In general, a Member might achieve his or her goal at one of three stages: the introduction of legislation, the consideration of a measure in the House or Senate, or the passage of a measure by the House, the Senate, or both. Should Congress want to commemorate a day, week, or month, several options might allow a Member to meet his or her goal within the confines of House or Senate rules.

## House of Representatives

### Introduction

Though House Rule XII, clause 5, prohibits the introduction or consideration of legislation that would establish or express a date-specific commemoration, hundreds of commemorative resolutions that would in some way recognize a day, week, or month are introduced each Congress.

CRS and Bush School capstone analysis indicates that introduced resolutions appear to 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.<sup>45</sup> For example, in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, H.Res. 194 was introduced to express "support for designation of the month of May as Williams Syndrome Awareness Month."<sup>46</sup> The text of the resolution is in the box below.

### H.Res. 194 (113<sup>th</sup> 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;

<sup>43</sup> Roger H. Davidson, Walter J. Oleszek, Frances E. Lee, and Eric Schickler, *Congress and Its Members*, 15<sup>th</sup> edition (Washington: CQ Press, 2016), p. 206. Additionally, Members might take credit for their measures as they move through the legislative process.

<sup>44</sup> Richard F. Fenno, *Senators on the Campaign Trail* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), pp. 245-259.

<sup>45</sup> "Whereas" clauses, which are also called preambles, are "introductory language describing the reasons for and intent of a measure." For more information, see U.S. Congress, House, "Preambles," *House Practice: A Guide to the Rules, Precedents, and Procedures of the House*, prepared by Charles W. Johnson, John V. Sullivan, and Thomas J. Wickham, Jr., 115<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess. (Washington: GPO, 2017), §5, p. 169, at <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-HPRACTICE-115/pdf/GPO-HPRACTICE-115.pdf#page=179>.

<sup>46</sup> H.Res. 194 (113<sup>th</sup> Congress), introduced April 26, 2013.

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. Although introduction was likely allowed because the resolution specified a date only in the “whereas clauses,” scheduling the measure under suspension proceedings still may have been circumscribed by Republican Conference rules, which at the time guided the Republican leader (majority leader in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress) on the scheduling of legislation under “Suspension of the Rules” in the House.<sup>47</sup>

## Consideration

Since House Rule XII, clause 5 was adopted in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, 4,802 date-specific commemorative measures have been identified that were introduced in the House or sent to the House after passage in the Senate. Of these measures, the House passed or agreed to 1,180 between the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress and the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress. As shown in **Figure 3**, the vast majority of these measures were passed or agreed to prior to the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress. CRS and Bush School capstone research identified the three most common methods of consideration used by the House to consider date-specific commemorative measures—suspension of the rules (90.8%), unanimous consent (7.2%), and adoption of a special rule (1.3%). Additionally, nine measures (0.8%) were considered under another procedure.<sup>48</sup>

## Suspension of the Rules

Suspension of the rules is a House procedure that, among other features, imposes a limit on how long the House may debate a measure.<sup>49</sup> Considering a measure under suspension of the rules limits debate to 40 minutes, prohibits floor amendments, and requires a two-thirds vote for

<sup>47</sup> U.S. Congress, House, Republican Conference, “Rule 28—Guidelines on Suspension of House Rules,” *Rules of the House Republican Conference for the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress—Comparative Print Showing Changes from the Rules of the House Republican Conference for the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress*, 114<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., p. 25, at <https://westerman.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/westerman.house.gov/files/114-Conference-Rules-113-Comp-Print1.pdf#page=25>.

<sup>48</sup> For example, in the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress (2001-2002), the House considered H.Con.Res. 464, “Expressing the sense of the Congress on the anniversary of the terrorist attacks launched against the United States on September 11, 2001,” as a privileged matter. The resolution was initially debated for one hour, before an additional 30 minutes was added to the debate by unanimous consent. For more information, see “Expressing the sense of the Congress on the anniversary of the terrorist attacks launched against the United States on September 11, 2001,” *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol 148 (September 11, 2001), pp.H6174-H6208 and H6215-H6216.

<sup>49</sup> For more information, see “Under Suspension of the Rules,” in CRS Report 95-563, *The Legislative Process on the House Floor: An Introduction*, by Christopher M. Davis.

passage.<sup>50</sup> In the 102<sup>nd</sup> and 103<sup>rd</sup> Congresses (prior to the adoption of House Rule XII, clause 5), approximately 5% of date-specific commemorative measures agreed to in the House were considered under suspension of the rules. Following the adoption of House Rule XII, clause 5, the House utilized suspension of the rules for 95% of date-specific measures it considered. For example, in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress (2010-2011), the House agreed to H.Res. 1655 to support National Farm to School Month.<sup>51</sup> An excerpt from the *Congressional Record* entry for H.Res. 1655 is in the text box below.

### Supporting National Farm to School Month

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1655) expressing support for designation of October as “National Farm to School Month,” as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

...

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Ms. Hirono) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, House Resolution 1655, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.<sup>52</sup>

### Unanimous Consent

Unanimous consent is “a request ... [to] suspend the order of business temporarily. Granting the request permits some action that is not in dispute and to which no Member has any objection.”<sup>53</sup> Prior to the adoption of House Rule XII, clause 5 (102<sup>nd</sup> and 103<sup>rd</sup> Congresses), approximately 95% of date-specific commemorative measures agreed to in the House were considered by unanimous consent. Following the adoption of House Rule XII, clause 5, the House considered 85 date-specific measures by unanimous consent (7.2% of all measures so considered in the House). For example, in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress, the House agreed to H.Res. 1046, supporting the designation of August 2020 as National Women’s Suffrage Month.<sup>54</sup> The *Congressional Record* entry for H.Res. 1046 is in the text box below.

### Supporting the Designation of August 2020 as National Women’s Suffrage Month

Ms. ESCOBAR. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration of H. Res. 1046, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Texas?

There was no objection.

<sup>50</sup> CRS Report 98-314, *Suspension of the Rules in the House: Principal Features*, by Elizabeth Rybicki.

<sup>51</sup> H.Res. 1655 (111<sup>th</sup> Congress), agreed to November 16, 2010.

<sup>52</sup> “Supporting National Farm to School Month,” *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 156 (November 16, 2010), pp. H7479-H7481.

<sup>53</sup> U.S. Congress, House, “Chapter 54: Unanimous-Consent Agreements,” *House Practice: A Guide to the Rules, Precedents, and Procedures of the House*, prepared by Charles W. Johnson, John V. Sullivan, and Thomas J. Wickham, Jr., 115<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 2017, p. 907, at <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-HPRACTICE-115/pdf/GPO-HPRACTICE-115-55.pdf>.

<sup>54</sup> H.Res. 1046 (116<sup>th</sup> Congress), agreed to July 29, 2020.

...

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.<sup>55</sup>

### *Special Rules*

In some cases, date-specific commemorative resolutions have been considered under a “special rule,” which proposes to make a bill in order on the House floor.<sup>56</sup> A special rule is reported by the House Rules Committee and generally provides provisions relating to “the amount of general debate, the amendment process, and waivers to be granted, if any.”<sup>57</sup> The House can then consider the special rule, and if the rule is adopted the House considers the measure pursuant to a provision in the rule.<sup>58</sup> In the 102<sup>nd</sup> and 103<sup>rd</sup> Congresses (prior to the adoption of House Rule XII, clause 5), one date-specific commemorative was considered pursuant to a special rule. In the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress, the House and Senate designated National Youth Service Day (April 19, 1994, and April 18, 1995) when P.L. 103-82 was enacted.<sup>59</sup>

Since the adoption of House Rule XII, clause 5, the House has considered a date-specific commemorative under a special rule at least 15 times, sometimes as part of an omnibus measure. For example, in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year, 2006, the House and Senate recognized Operation Enduring Freedom Day.<sup>60</sup>

#### **Sec. 378. Commemoration of Success of the Armed Forces in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom**

(a) CELEBRATION HONORING MILITARY EFFORTS IN OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM AND OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM.—The President may—

(1) designate a day of celebration to honor the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines of the Armed Forces who have served in Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom and have returned to the United States; and

(2) issue a proclamation calling on the people of the United States to observe that day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.<sup>61</sup>

### **Senate**

As noted above under “Congressional Rules on Commemorative Legislation,” the Senate does not have any chamber-wide restrictions on the introduction, scheduling, or consideration of date-specific commemorative legislation. Therefore, Senate resolutions can contain a specific date in

<sup>55</sup> “Supporting the Designation of August 2020 as National Women’s Suffrage Month,” *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 166 (July 29, 2020), pp. H3966-H3967

<sup>56</sup> For more information, see “Under a Special Rule Reported by the Committee on Rules,” in CRS Report 95-563, *The Legislative Process on the House Floor: An Introduction*, by Christopher M. Davis.

<sup>57</sup> U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Rules, “Special Rules Process,” at <https://rules.house.gov/about/special-rule-process>.

<sup>58</sup> U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Rules, “Special Rules Process,” at <https://rules.house.gov/about/special-rule-process>.

<sup>59</sup> P.L. 103-82, §104(c), 107 Stat. 842 (1993); 42 U.S.C. §12653.

<sup>60</sup> P.L. 109-163 (119 Stat. 3136 (2006)) was considered under the provisions of the rule outlined in H.Res. 293 (109<sup>th</sup> Congress), agreed to May 25, 2006.

<sup>61</sup> P.L. 109-163, §378, 119 Stat. 3214 (2006).

the text following the resolving clause (although this is not a requirement).<sup>62</sup> For example, S.Res. 131 (112<sup>th</sup> Congress) designated April 2011 as “Tsunami Awareness Month.”<sup>63</sup>

### **S.Res. 131 (112<sup>th</sup> 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](http://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.

The Senate generally considers date-specific commemorative measures by unanimous consent. Overall, between the 102<sup>nd</sup> and 117<sup>th</sup> Congresses, 5,914 date-specific measures were introduced or received (from the House) by the Senate. Of these, 2,534 were not considered (43%). Of the 3,380 date-specific measures that were considered, 84% were considered by unanimous consent. The remainder (16%) were agreed to or passed by either voice vote or a recorded vote.

## **Concluding Observations**

Legislation that in some way recognizes, supports, honors, or acknowledges certain days, weeks, and months continues to be introduced each Congress. The quantity of measures offered in both chambers suggests that many Members of Congress see value in introducing commemorative

<sup>62</sup> For an example of a Senate resolution that does not include a specific date after the resolving clause, see S.Res. 79 (113<sup>th</sup> Congress), agreed to March 18, 2013.

<sup>63</sup> S.Res. 131 (112<sup>th</sup> Congress), agreed to April 5, 2011.

legislation, perhaps in part to establish connections with their districts and states.<sup>64</sup> The desire to recognize 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 House party rules and/or majority party protocols) may preclude any further action on such resolutions.

The House adoption of Rule XII, clause 5, in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress was initially followed by a decrease in the number of both introduced and considered date-specific commemorative measures in the House. After House adoption of the rule there was also a shift in the type of legislative vehicle used to commemorate a time period from lawmaking vehicles in the 102<sup>nd</sup> and 103<sup>rd</sup> Congresses, to simple resolutions in the 104<sup>th</sup>-117<sup>th</sup> Congresses. The switch from lawmaking vehicles to resolutions has allowed the Senate to independently recognize time periods without the House's concurrence (or the need for the President to sign a bill or joint resolution into law).

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<sup>64</sup> Roger H. Davidson, "The New Centralization on Capitol Hill," *Review of Politics* vol. 50, no. 3 (Summer 1988), p. 354.



## Appendix. Patriotic and National Observances

**Table A-I. Title 36 Patriotic and National Observances**

Listed in Order of Enactment

<b>Commemoration</b>	<b>Date of Enactment</b>	<b>Bill Number/Statute</b>	<b>Section of Title 36</b>	<b>Currently Designated Date(s)</b>
Mother's Day	5/8/1914	63 <sup>rd</sup> H.J. Res. 263, 38 Stat. 770	117	Second Sunday in May
Child Health Day	5/18/1928	70 <sup>th</sup> H.J. Res. 184, 45 Stat. 617	105	First Monday in October
National Maritime Day	5/20/1933	73 <sup>rd</sup> S.J. Res. 50, 48 Stat. 73	128	May 22
Columbus Day	4/30/1934	73 <sup>rd</sup> H.J. Res. 10, 48 Stat. 657	107	Second Monday in October
Gold Star Mother's Day	6/23/1936	74 <sup>th</sup> S.J. Res. 115, 49 Stat. 1895	111	Last Sunday in September
Thomas Jefferson's Birthday	8/16/1937	75 <sup>th</sup> H.J. Res. 284, 50 Stat. 668	141	April 13
Cancer Control Month	3/28/1938	75 <sup>th</sup> H.J. Res. 468, 52 Stat. 148	103	Month of April
National Aviation Day	5/11/1939	76 <sup>th</sup> S.J. 111, 53 Stat. 739	118	August 19
Pan American Aviation Day	10/10/1940	76 <sup>th</sup> S.J. Res. 293, 54 Stat. 1093	134	December 17
National Disability Employment Awareness Month	8/11/1945	79 <sup>th</sup> 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 1
Flag Day	8/3/1949	P.L. 81-203, 63 Stat. 492	110	June 14
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 13
Constitution Day and Citizenship Day	2/29/1952	P.L. 82-261, 66 Stat. 9	106	September 17
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 17-September 23
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

<b>Commemoration</b>	<b>Date of Enactment</b>	<b>Bill Number/Statute</b>	<b>Section of Title 36</b>	<b>Currently Designated Date(s)</b>
Loyalty Day	7/18/1958	P.L. 85-529, 72 Stat. 369	115	May 1
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 1
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 15
Police Week	10/1/1962	P.L. 87-726, 76 Stat. 676	137	Week in which May 15 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 17
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 9
White Cane Safety Day	10/6/1964	P.L. 88-628, 78 Stat. 1003	142	October 15
National Flag Week	6/9/1966	P.L. 89-443, 80 Stat. 194	122	Week in which June 14 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 15 through October 15
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 7

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 27 <sup>a</sup>
Patriot Day	12/18/2001	P.L. 107-89, 115 Stat. 877	144	September 11
Veterans Day Moment of Silence	10/7/2016	P.L. 114-240 130 Stat. 974	145	Veterans Day
National Atomic Veterans Day	12/27/2021	P.L. 117-81, Division A, Title X, §1084(a) 135 Stat. 1924	146	[not specified] <sup>b</sup>
Choose Respect Day	3/15/2022	P.L. 117-103, Division W, Title XIII, §1310(b)(1) 136 Stat. 931	147	October 1
U.S. Hostage and Wrongful Detainee Day	12/22/2023	P.L. 118-31, Title XVIII, Subtitle A, §1804	148	March 9

**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.”
- b. The legislation authorizing National Atomic Veterans Day does not specify a particular day, rather, it directs the President to “issue each year a proclamation calling on the people of the United States to—(1) observe Atomic Veterans Day with appropriate ceremonies and activities; and (2) remember and honor the atomic veterans of the United States whose brave service and sacrifice played an important role in the defense of the Nation.” On July 15, 2022, President Joe Biden issued the first proclamation for National Atomic Veterans Day, recognizing July 16 as the celebratory date. U.S. President (Biden), “A Proclamation on National Atomic Veterans Day, 2022,” press release, July 15, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/07/15/a-proclamation-on-national-atomic-veterans-day-2022>. In 2023, President Biden also recognized July 16 as National Atomic Veterans Day. U.S. President (Biden), “A Proclamation on National Atomic Veterans Day, 2023,” press release, July 14, 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2023/07/14/a-proclamation-on-national-atomic-veterans-day-2023>.

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