

A Bill for an Act Relating to Hawaiian Independence Day.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that every state in our nation celebrates holidays unique to that state's history. Texas celebrates its own Texas Independence Day, a day honoring Texas' independence from Mexico's central government. Utah celebrates Pioneer Day, the day Brigham Young arrived in Utah's Great Salt Lake Valley. Alaska celebrates Seward's Day to recognize the day that the purchase treaty between the United States and Russia was codified. The distinctive cultural and storied past of Hawaii has its own holidays that have been celebrated through the territorial period of Hawaii's history. La Kuokoa, Hawaiian Independence Day, was widely celebrated with pride as Hawaii became an emerging power in the Pacific among the global powers of that time.

The history and culture of Hawaii are showcased around the world to tell the story of the archipelago. Hawaii's culture and native language are used to make areas, buildings, and communities relevant with a sense of place. La Kuokoa has long been a source of pride in Hawaii and in recent years has garnered a newfound energy in its celebration.

The legislature further finds that during the reign of Kamehameha III, Great Britain and France recognized the independence of the Kingdom of Hawaii by joint proclamation on November 28, 1843. The United States followed on July 6, 1844. These leading world powers recognized Hawaii as an independent nation state due to the diplomatic work of Timoteo Haalilio, the first diplomat of the Kingdom of Hawaii, and his associate William Richards, who were sent as envoys of Kamehameha III to secure formal diplomatic relations with these countries.

In 1847, Kamehameha III required his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Robert Crichton Wyllie, to propose a suitable way to recognize and celebrate the anniversary of Hawaii's welcome into the family of nations. On October 15, 1847, Wyllie delivered his report, by Privy Council, to the King and ministers. That year marked the first official celebration of Hawaiian Independence Day, La Kuokoa.

Throughout the 1850s and 1870s, Hawaii celebrated La Kuokoa with luau, music, and marches. The celebration grew under the reign of King Kalakaua, with formal proclamations sent by official circular to the foreign diplomatic corps in Hawaii and the Kingdom of Hawaii consuls abroad, informing them of the holiday.

The day remained a national holiday under the Provisional Government of Hawaii, the Republic of Hawaii, and the initial years of the Territory of Hawaii. La Kuokoa was included in the codified list of national holidays enacted by the Republic of Hawaii in 1896.

Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish November 28 of each year as La Kuokoa, Hawaiian Independence Day, to celebrate the historical recognition of the independence of the Kingdom of Hawaii.

SECTION 2. Chapter 8, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

"§8- La Kuokoa; Hawaiian Independence Day. November 28 of each year shall be known and designated as La Kuokoa, Hawaiian Independence Day, to celebrate the historical recognition of the independence of the Kingdom of Hawaii. This day is not and shall not be construed to be a state holiday."

SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.¹

SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

(Approved April 19, 2023.)

Note

1. Edited pursuant to HRS §23G-16.5.