



Department of the Secretary of State

Shenna Bellows
Secretary of State

Dr. Lelia DeAndrade
Deputy Secretary of State

January 30, 2024

The Honorable Tim Nangle, Senate Chair
Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

The Honorable Holly Stover, House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Dear Senator Nangle, Representative Stover and Members of the Committee,

L.D. 1243, Resolve, Directing the Secretary of State to Propose a State Calendar, directs the Secretary of State to submit a calendar, by January 31, 2024, to the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government. The resolve further states that this calendar, to be known as "the State Calendar," should include important religious days and holidays of the State's residents and the citizens of the United States."

The resolve also directs the Secretary of State to create this state calendar in consultation with persons representing: the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish faiths, as well as persons representing other religious traditions practiced in the state, immigrants, the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous, and Tribal populations, and a representative from the federally recognized Indian nations in the state.

As directed, this office convened a working group composed of seven people, representing the groups detailed above¹. This working group met three times in late 2023 and early 2024. To accomplish this task, the working group completed the following, which are included in this report: 1) defined the purpose and criteria for selecting holidays to be listed; 2) developed guidelines for the ongoing administration of the calendar; and 3) drafted a proposed 2024 calendar.

PURPOSE

The working group reviewed L.D. 1243, with the assistance of its co-authors, Representative Osher and Representative Dhalac, who explained their intent and shared their experiences with

¹ See Appendix A for a list of working group members.

work meetings held on religious holidays or that conflicted with their religious practices. The working group agreed that its purpose of the state calendar is to provide information to government entities to:

support scheduling public meetings and other state business on dates that are accessible to the broadest range of people.

In addition, we agreed that it is important to emphasize that the purpose of the calendar is not to add additional paid state holidays and is intended for state government entities only. Further, the state calendar is not intended to identify days in which meetings are absolutely prohibited. Rather, the intention is to raise awareness of major religious holidays so that they can be avoided, whenever possible, when scheduling meetings or public facing events.

Our working group recognized and appreciated that a calendar of religious holidays may have other positive impacts, including but not limited to, raising awareness and increasing understanding of the various religious practices observed by Maine people, and that by extension, it may be understood to reflect the value of and respect for these practices.

CRITERIA

With this purpose in mind, the working group defined the criteria to be used to identify included holidays. They are those days that most commonly celebrated by religious group members in Maine and that involve practices that would make it difficult for adherents to attend work related meetings or events. These practices include preparing for and/or attending events, ceremonies, or family gatherings, travel and prayer or other rituals or rites².

It is important to note that because the calendar will only include days or periods that involve observances or practices that conflict with or hinder work, it will not include *all* significant religious holidays. It will exclude religious holidays that are traditionally observed apart from the regular workday, such as on weekends and evenings. For example, the Jewish holiday, Hannukah, the Christian holiday, Easter and the Hindu holiday, Holi, while all significant, typically do not require practices during the regular workday.

To meet the requirement stated in the resolve of including religious days that are important to the “State’s residents,” the working group reviewed data detailing the religions practiced in Maine, the number of congregations and adherents. We recommend that these data be used to ensure that the calendar best reflects the religious days that are most relevant to Maine people. Holidays included on the calendar should be those of religions with at least one active congregation and at least five hundred adherents in Maine.³

Staff from the Secretary of State’s office conducted research following these criteria to identify religious holidays for the calendar. We used resources such as the Association of Religion Data Archives⁴, and Jesuit Resource.org, for information about holiday observances. The working group also reviewed a calendar of significant dates produced for the RSU 2 School District. Finally, we received guidance from Dr. Lauress Lawrence, former professor of Religious

² See Appendix B for further details about religious holiday criteria.

³ See Appendix C for a list of those religions.

⁴ <https://www.thearda.com/us-religion/census/congregational-membership>.

Studies, Regis College, Navan Leng, President of the Watt Samaki Temple, Stanley Corbett through the Baha'i of the United States and Parivash Rohani, a member of the Baha'i community in Maine.

Because we did not have a representative of the Wabanaki nations, we contacted Donald Sockomah, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, for information about significant Wabanaki religious days. Mr. Sockomah provided a list of culturally significant days, but none require practices that would interfere with work so were not included on the state calendar.

CALENDAR ADMINISTRATION

The working group recommends that the Secretary of State's office be charged with maintaining the calendar. Further, to best support advanced scheduling, we agreed that the calendar should be completed and distributed to all state agencies no later than June 1st of the preceding year. The calendar should also be made available via social media.

The calendar should be reviewed and updated every ten years, to ensure that it reflects dates that are significant to religions practiced by Maine people.

The calendar should also include the following additional information:

- Because many religious holidays are not based on a Gregorian calendar, the dates that they are observed vary each year. Some dates may be approximate, because the holy day is based on a lunar calendar.
- Jewish, Islamic and Baha'i observances may begin at sunset.
- Religious holidays are not celebrated by all members of the religion in the same way. Practices vary by region and culture.
- Holidays may require observances or practices that must be prepared by adherents hours or days in advance.

PROPOSED STATE CALENDAR

Based on the above considerations, the working group identified twenty major religious holidays that should be considered when scheduling meetings. These are listed in Appendix D, along with the eleven existing state holidays.

Finally, we want to reiterate the importance of this calendar for helping support the accessibility of Maine government business for people of varied faiths.

I look forward to working with you as you consider this report. Please feel free to contact me if I can provide you with any additional materials, answer any questions or assist you in any way.

Sincerely,



Shenna Bellows
Secretary of State

APPENDIX A

Working Group Members

- Rep. Randy Greenwood, representing the Christian Faith
- Rev. Jane Field, Executive Director, Maine Council of Churches, representing the Christian Faith
- Rep. Deqa Dhalac, representing the Muslim Faith
- Rep. Laurie Osher, representing the Jewish Faith
- Chris Myers Asch, representing the Jewish Faith
- Abdikhadir Negeye, Assistant Director and Refugee Resettlement Program Manager, Maine Immigrant and Refugee Services representing the Muslim Faith and Immigrant Communities
- Angela Okafor, Director of Community Engagement, Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous, and Tribal Populations.

We also contacted the Wabanaki Tribal Chiefs, to request a unanimous, joint recommendation to represent the federally recognized nations. They did not submit a recommendation.

APPENDIX B

Criteria for selecting Religious Holidays to be included on the State Calendar

Days that are most commonly celebrated by religious group members in Maine and that involve practices that would make it difficult for practitioners to attend work related meetings or events. These practices include:

- preparing for and/or attending events, ceremonies, or family gatherings
- travel
- prayer or other rituals or rites
- volunteering or service
- abstaining from activities that are often required or fundamental to work such as
 - using electricity or equipment
 - attending cross gender gatherings
 - speaking
 - eating

APPENDIX C
U.S. Religious Census- Maine 2020
 Association of Religious Data Archives

Tradition	Number of Congregations	Number of Adherents
Black Protestant	9	1,308
Buddhism	15	2,333
Catholic	130	219,233
Evangelical Protestant	681	83,172
Hinduism	5	553
Islam	8	16,894
Jehovah's Witnesses	53	9,372
Judaism	12	3,244
Latter-day Saints	27	10,958
Mainline Protestant	574	66,423
Orthodox	11	1,541
Other		
Baha'i Faith	6	883
National Spiritualist Association of Churches	5	0
Other Christians		
Church of Christ, Scientist	5	0
New Apostolic Church USA	1	0
Swedenborgian Church	3	128
Unitarian Universalist Association	26	3,481
United Church of God	1	0
Unity Churches, Association of	2	0
Total	1,574	419,523

APPENDIX D

MAJOR RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

with work-restrictions recommended for inclusion on Maine State Calendar

Christmas (Eastern Orthodox)	Vesak (Buddhist)
Maha Shivaratri (Hindu)	Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Sahib (Sikh)
Ramadan (Islam)	Eid al-Adha (Islam)
Naw-Ruz (Baha'i)	Janmashtami (Hindu)
Good Friday (Christian)	Rosh Hashanah (Jewish)
Rama Navami (Hindu)	Yom Kippur (Jewish)
Ridvan begins (Baha'i)	Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Sahib (Sikh)
Passover (Jewish)	Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib (Sikh)*
Good Friday (Eastern Orthodox)	

2024 Major Religious Holidays

Religion	Holiday	Date
Baha'i	Naw-Rúz	3/20
Baha'i	First Day of Ridvan	4/20-4/21
Buddhist	Vesak	5/23
Christian	Good Friday	3/29
Eastern Orthodox	Eastern Orthodox Christmas	1/7
Eastern Orthodox	Eastern Orthodox Good Friday	5/3
Hindu	Maha Shivaratri	3/8
Hindu	Rama Navami	4/17
Hindu	Krishna Janmashtami	8/26
Islam	Ramadan begins	3/10
Islam	Ramadan ends	4/9
Islam	Eid al-Fitr	4/9-4/10
Islam	Eid-al-Adha	6/16-6/17
Jewish	Passover begins	4/22
Jewish	Passover ends	4/30
Jewish	Rosh Hashanah	10/2-10/4
Jewish	Yom Kippur	10/11-10/12
Sikh	Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Sahib	6/16
Sikh	Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Sahib	11/15

*Note: The Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur falls on a Sunday in 2024 so is not included among the 2024 holidays.

2024 State and Religious Holidays

January							February							March							April						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6					1	2	3						1	2		1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31				25	26	27	28	29			24	25	26	27	28	29	30	28	29	30				
														31													
May							June							July							August						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4							1		1	2	3	4	5	6					1	2	3
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
26	27	28	29	30	31		23	24	25	26	27	28	29	28	29	30	31				25	26	27	28	29	30	31
							30																				
September							October							November							December						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7			1	2	3	4	5						1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30						27	28	29	30	31			24	25	26	27	28	29	30	29	30	31				

State and Federal Holidays
 Major Religious Holidays

Jan 1	New Year's Day	Apr 17	Rama Navami (Hindu)	Jul 4	Independence Day
Jan 7	Christmas (Eastern Orthodox)	Apr 20-21	Ridvan begins (Baha'i)	Aug 26	Janmashtami (Hindu)
Jan 15	M L King Day	Apr 22	Passover begins (Jewish)	Sep 2	Labor Day
Feb 19	Presidents' Day	Apr 30	Passover ends (Jewish)	Oct 2-4	Rosh Hashanah (Jewish)
Mar 8	Maha Shivaratri (Hindu)	May 3	Good Friday (Eastern Orthodox)	Oct 11-12	Yom Kippur (Jewish)
Mar 10	Ramadan begins (Islam)	May 23	Vesak (Buddhist)	Oct 14	Indigenous People's Day
Mar 19-20	Naw-Ruz (Baha'i)	May 27	Memorial Day	Nov 11	Veterans Day
Mar 29	Good Friday (Christian)	Jun 16	Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Sahib (Sikh)	Nov 15	Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Sahib (Sikh)
Apr 9	Ramadan Ends (Islam)	Jun 16-17	Eid al-Adha (Islam)	Nov 28	Thanksgiving Day
Apr 9-10	Eid al-Fitr (Islam)	Jun 19	Juneteenth	Dec 25	Christmas (Federal)

RESOLVES OF 2023, CHAPTER 91
LD 1243: Resolve, Directing the Secretary of State to Propose a State Calendar

DRAFT LEGISLATION

January 2024

“An Act Establishing a State Calendar for the State of Maine”

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

5 MRSA §90-H, State Calendar is enacted to read:

1. **Calendar established.** A state calendar is established within the Department of the Secretary of State that includes important religious days and holidays of the State's residents and the citizens of the United States.

2. **Limitation.** The state calendar shall not add additional paid state holidays and is intended for state government entities only to consult when scheduling public facing events.

3. **Administration.** Every 10 years the Secretary of State shall review and update the state calendar in consultation with persons representing: the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish faiths, as well as persons representing other religious traditions practiced in the state, immigrants, the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous, and Tribal populations, and representatives from the federally recognized Indian nations in the state

4. **Distribution.** The Secretary of State shall distribute the calendar to all state agencies no later than June 1 of the preceding year. The calendar shall also be made available on the department's webpage and social media.