

**First Regular Session
Seventy-fifth General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO**

INTRODUCED

LLS NO. 25-0628.02 Caroline Martin x5902

HOUSE BILL 25-1266

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

Stewart K. and Garcia,

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

(None),

House Committees

State, Civic, Military, & Veterans Affairs

Senate Committees

A BILL FOR AN ACT

101 **CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COLORADO AMERICAN INDIAN**
102 **RECOGNITION DAY AS AN OBSERVED STATE HOLIDAY.**

Bill Summary

(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at <http://leg.colorado.gov>.)

The bill designates Colorado American Indian Recognition Day as an observed, but not a legal, state holiday.

1 *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.
Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing law.
Dashes through the words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law.

1 **SECTION 1. Legislative declaration.** (1) The general assembly
2 finds and declares that:

3 (a) Colorado has the responsibility to cultivate a community that
4 honors and respects the diverse history of the lands making up the state
5 by recognizing the history and contributions of the Nuuchiu (Ute) people
6 who have called this land home since time immemorial, as they have no
7 migration story, and members of other federally recognized tribes whose
8 ancestors have historical ties to this state;

9 (b) Colorado is the ancestral homeland of the Southern Ute Indian
10 Tribe and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, the two federally recognized tribes
11 having reservations within the exterior boundaries of the state. In
12 addition, it has historical ties to 46 other federally recognized tribal
13 nations, including the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Apache, Comanche, and
14 Kiowa. The state recognizes their history, cultural contributions, and
15 sovereignty.

16 (c) Colorado recognizes that 48 American Indian nations,
17 including the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe,
18 have demonstrated resilience and continue to thrive, making significant
19 cultural, social, and economic contributions to the state. Their histories,
20 traditions, and contemporary achievements are integral to Colorado's
21 identity.

22 (d) Colorado further understands that recognizing and celebrating
23 the histories and contributions of American Indian nations with ancestral
24 and, with respect to the Ute tribes, legal ties to Colorado is essential to
25 fostering education, cultural awareness, and reconciliation;

26 (e) In addition to celebrating the myriad ways in which American
27 Indians have and continue to meaningfully contribute to the state,

1 Colorado also acknowledges the history of genocide, forced removal, and
2 systemic discrimination that American Indian nations have endured, in
3 Colorado and throughout the United States, the forced placement onto
4 reservations, broken treaties, and the loss of traditional lands and cultural
5 practices;

6 (f) Specifically, Colorado recognizes the Battle of Milk Creek, in
7 which Major Thomas Thornburgh and his federal cavalry violated the Ute
8 Treaty of 1868 by crossing the Ute reservation. The Ute Indians defended
9 their sovereignty and held off the cavalry for 6 days, resulting in the death
10 of 24 Utes. The unlawful attack by Major Thornburgh led to the
11 relocation of the Ute tribes to their present reservations.

12 (g) Colorado further recognizes the Beaver Creek Massacre of
13 1885 in which Colorado residents killed 6 adults and children who were
14 members of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and wounded 2 others. They
15 were seeking to hunt for food to feed their families. The Ute families
16 were starving because the federal government had failed to provide
17 rations in accordance with its treaty obligations.

18 (h) Colorado also recognizes the Sand Creek Massacre of 1864,
19 in which over 230 Cheyenne and Arapaho men, women, and children
20 were brutally murdered by the 1st Colorado Infantry Regiment of
21 Volunteers (US) and 3rd Regiment of Colorado Cavalry Volunteers (US);

22 (i) These acts of violence represent some of the darkest moments
23 in the state's history, and their impact continues to be felt by American
24 Indian communities today;

25 (j) Finally, Colorado acknowledges other critical incidents in the
26 state's history that have inflicted historical and ongoing trauma upon
27 American Indian nations, including the removal of children to federal

1 Indian boarding schools, the suppression of language and cultural
2 practices, and other policies aimed at erasing American Indian identities;
3 and

4 (k) Therefore, the general assembly declares the designation of a
5 state holiday to honor and celebrate the histories, cultures, and
6 contributions of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, the Ute Mountain Ute
7 Tribe, and all American Indian nations with historic ties to Colorado. This
8 holiday will serve as an opportunity for education, recognition,
9 remembrance, celebration, and appreciation, ensuring that the stories,
10 legacies, and sovereignty of these nations remain an integral part of
11 Colorado's past, present, and future.

12 **SECTION 2.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add** 24-11-119 as
13 follows:

14 **24-11-119. Colorado American Indian Recognition Day.** THE
15 SECOND MONDAY OF OCTOBER IN EACH YEAR IS KNOWN AS "COLORADO
16 AMERICAN INDIAN RECOGNITION DAY". APPROPRIATE OBSERVANCE MAY
17 BE HELD BY THE PUBLIC AND IN ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF THE STATE TO
18 RECOGNIZE THE THRIVING CULTURE, ACKNOWLEDGE THE RESILIENCE AND
19 PLIGHT, AND CELEBRATE THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF AMERICAN INDIANS AND
20 COLORADO'S LONGEST CONTINUOUS RESIDENTS, THE UTE PEOPLE, AND
21 THEIR SOVEREIGN NATIONS, THE SOUTHERN UTE INDIAN TRIBE AND UTE
22 MOUNTAIN UTE TRIBE.

23 **SECTION 3. Act subject to petition - effective date.** This act
24 takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day following the expiration of the
25 ninety-day period after final adjournment of the general assembly; except
26 that, if a referendum petition is filed pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V
27 of the state constitution against this act or an item, section, or part of this

1 act within such period, then the act, item, section, or part will not take
2 effect unless approved by the people at the general election to be held in
3 November 2026 and, in such case, will take effect on the date of the
4 official declaration of the vote thereon by the governor.