

County of Santa Clara
Supervisory District Three



24-4250

DATE: February 6, 2024 (Item No. 32)
TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Otto Lee, Supervisor
SUBJECT: Lunar New Year as a County Holiday

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Approve referral to Administration to report to the Board on May 7, 2024 with options for consideration relating to the viability and costs associated with declaring Lunar New Year a County holiday. (Lee)

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial costs associated with this referral are currently unknown since County Administration has not implemented Lunar New Year as an official holiday.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

Lunar New Year is one of the most important holidays in China, Vietnam, South Korea and one of the most widely celebrated among Asian Americans. This holiday is also a popular one among local organizations and groups that host annual events, bringing together many community members in celebration.

In Santa Clara County, Asian Americans account for 41.4% of the population. As of January 2024, nearly a third of the County's 24,000+ employees (coded and Extra Help) identify as Asian American or Pacific Islander.

An official recognition by the County of Lunar New Year would help acknowledge the diversity and cultural significance that the Asian American and Pacific Islander community brings to Santa Clara County, similar to the County's holiday observances for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Cesar Chavez Day and Juneteenth. A possible commemoration of Lunar New Year as an official County holiday would be especially meaningful considering recent waves of hatred and violence toward Asian Americans that has escalated since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

BACKGROUND

Other municipalities in California, including the state itself, have made strides in officially recognizing Lunar New Year in their respective jurisdictions:

- In 2006, the San Francisco Unified School District Board of Trustees approved a

resolution that made the holiday an annual event even if the Lunar New Year falls on a weekend.

- City College of San Francisco observes Lunar New Year as a day off for the college community. California education code specifies the holidays that community colleges can celebrate, and the two required days in February are Lincoln Day and Washington Day, are usually combined into a single holiday (Presidents' Day). This holiday thus frees up a day for another celebration, and the college has opted to celebrate Presidents Day and the Lunar New Year. Locally, the San Jose-Evergreen Community College District has added Lunar New Year as an official district holiday.
- In 2022, Governor Gavin Newsom signed AB 2596 (Low), declaring Lunar New Year to be a state holiday. But the designation in California is largely symbolic because the law as enacted didn't make the holiday a paid day off for state employees. Employees of the state can only use eight hours of vacation, annual leave, or compensating time off in lieu of receiving eight hours of personal holiday credit to observe the Lunar New Year.
- Last year, Assemblymember Phil Ting and City College of San Francisco Board of Trustees President Alan Wong announced a bill that would give community colleges the option to make Lunar New Year a state holiday. AB 264 would give students the opportunity to celebrate Lunar New Year without missing class. The bill offers community colleges the flexibility to observe Lunar New Year as a state holiday without increasing the number of days schools are closed. This means that community colleges could come up with solutions like combining Lincoln's and Washington's birthdays into one holiday and adding Lunar New Year as another holiday. Governor Newsom signed AB 264 into law.
- Similarly, the Santa Clara Valley Water District Board unanimously voted to recognize Lunar New Year as a paid holiday. Staff also recommended that Valley Water provide each employee one extra vacation day to be added to each employee's vacation balance in lieu of not receiving the holiday that year for Fiscal Year 2023 in observance of Lunar New Year.

In 2020, the Board of Supervisors unanimously passed a resolution proclaiming June 19 of each year as Juneteenth Day and a County holiday. Juneteenth Day commemorates and marks the effective end of slavery in the United States on June 19, 1865, almost two and one-half years after President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. The additional cost of implementing a holiday was estimated to be approximately \$2.3 million and subjected to change depending on staffing required and assignments made by operating departments on a given holiday.