

USMC's EEO Special Emphasis Observances

Special Emphasis Programs (SEP) are an integral part of the Equal Employment Opportunity Program. The purpose of this program is to ensure that the agency take affirmative steps to provide equal opportunity to minorities, women, and people with disabilities in all areas of employment. The term, "Special Emphasis Programs," refers specifically to employment-related programs which focus special attention on groups that are conspicuously absent or underrepresented in a specific occupational category or grade level in the agency's workforce. These programs serve as a channel for management officials. The goals of the Special Emphasis Programs are to:

- Improve employment and advancement opportunities for minorities, women, and people with disabilities in the Federal service;
- Identify systemic causes of discrimination against minorities, women, and people with disabilities;
- Seek ways to help minorities, women, and people with disabilities to advance by using their skills more fully;
- Monitor agency progress in eliminating discrimination and adverse impact on minorities, women, and people with disabilities in employment and agency programs; and
- Educate Federal employees and managers about the extent of various forms of discrimination within the Federal Service.

Special observances were designed to provide cultural awareness to everyone. Commemorative activities conducted for these observances should be educational and employment-related. Observances celebrate the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.; African American Heritage; Women's History; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) equal rights; Asian Pacific Americans; Women's Equality Day; Hispanic Americans; People with Disabilities; and American Indian/Alaskan Native Heritage.

The following are Special Emphasis Observances implemented by Presidential Proclamation, Executive Orders, and Public Law as cited below:

Month	Special Emphasis Programs Observances
January	Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr

February	African American History Month
March	National Women's History Month
May	Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month
June	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month
June 19th	Juneteenth
Sept 15 - Oct 15	National Hispanic Heritage Month
October	National Disability Employment Awareness Month
November	National American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month

January: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr

Authority: *Public Law 98-144; Public Law 98-399*

The first observance of the Federal legal holiday honoring the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. was established on January 20, 1986. This holiday serves as a time for Americans to reflect on the principles of racial equality and nonviolent social change espoused by Martin Luther King, Jr.; and it is appropriate for the Federal Government to coordinate efforts with Americans of diverse backgrounds and with private organizations in the observance of the Federal legal holiday honoring Martin Luther King, Jr.

February: African American History Month

Authority: *Executive Order 11478*

In 1926, Dr. Carter G. Woodson instituted the first week-long celebration to raise awareness of African Americans' contributions to history. 50 years later, the week became a month, and today February is celebrated as African American History Month. The month of February was chosen because it celebrates the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, both of whom dramatically affected the lives of African

Americans. Frederick Douglass (1817-1895) was a writer, lecturer, editor, and civil rights activist who escaped slavery at age 21 and went on to campaign for the abolition of slavery, establish a newspaper, and hold the office of Minister to Haiti. He was a major voice in the anti-slavery/civil rights movement of his time. Abraham Lincoln (born February 12, 1809), as the sixteenth president of the United States, issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, thereby declaring that all slaves within the Confederacy would be permanently free. Each year, the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASAALH) founded by Dr. Woodson, sets the theme for the month.

March: National Women's History Month

Authority: *Public Law 103-22, 107 Stat. 58 and Executive Order 11375*

National Women's History Month was established by a presidential proclamation to draw attention to and improve the focus on women in historical studies. It began in New York City on March 8, 1857, when female textile workers marched in protest of unfair working conditions and unequal rights for women. It was one of the first organized strikes by working women, during which they called for a shorter work day and decent wages. Also on March 8, 1908, women workers in the needle trades marched through New York City's Lower East Side to protest child labor and sweatshop working conditions, and demand women's suffrage. Beginning in 1910, March 8 became annually observed as International Women's Day. Women's History Week was instituted in 1978 to begin adding women's history into educational curricula. In 1987, the National Women's History Project successfully petitioned Congress to include all of March as a celebration of the economic, political, and social contributions of women.

May: Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month

Authority: *Executive Order 13339*

The roots of Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month can be traced back to 1976, when Jeanie Jew, President of the Organization of Chinese American Women, contacted government officials in response to the lack of Asian Pacific representation in the U.S. bicentennial celebrations that same year. The observance began in 1979 as Asian Heritage Week, established by congressional proclamation. In May 1990, the holiday was expanded further when President George Bush signed a proclamation making it month-long for that year. On October 23, 1992, Bush signed legislation designating May of every year Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. The month of May was chosen to commemorate two significant events in history: the immigration of the first Japanese immigrants to the United States on May 7, 1843, and the completion of the transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869 (Golden Spike Day). The diversity and common experiences of the many ethnic groups are celebrated during Asian Pacific

American Heritage Month with numerous community festivals as well as government-sponsored activities.

June: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month

Authority: *Proclamation 8387*

In June of 1969, patrons and supporters of the Stonewall Inn in New York City staged an uprising to resist the police harassment and persecution to which LGBT Americans were commonly subjected. This uprising marks the beginning of a movement to outlaw discriminatory laws and practices against LGBT Americans. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month commemorates the events of June 1969 and works to achieve equal justice and equal opportunity for LGBT Americans. In 1998, President Clinton issued Executive Order 13087 expanding equal opportunity employment in the Federal government by prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation. On June 2, 2000, President Clinton issued Proclamation No. 7316 for Gay and Lesbian Pride Month. On June 1, 2009, President Obama issued Proclamation No. 8387 for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month. In this proclamation, the President pointed to the contributions made by LGBT Americans both in promoting equal rights to all regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity and in broader initiatives such as the response to the global HIV pandemic. The President ended the proclamation by calling upon the people of the United States to "turn back discrimination and prejudice everywhere it exists."

June: Juneteenth (June 19)

Authority: *Act, S. 475*

June 19, 2021, marks the 156th anniversary of the last African American slaves being freed in Texas. This year, President Biden signed into law Juneteenth National Independence Day Act, S. 475, creating a federal holiday to commemorate Juneteenth.

On June 19, 1865, federal troops arrived in Galveston, Texas to take control of the state and ensure that all enslaved people be freed. This, however, was two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect in January 1863. This day, the oldest known celebration commemorating the end of slavery in the United States has become a day for African Americans to celebrate not only their freedom but their history, culture, and achievements.

September: National Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15-October 15)

Authority: *Executive Order 13230*

National Hispanic Heritage Month honors the culture, heritage, and contributions of Hispanic Americans each year. The event began in 1968 when Congress deemed the week, including September 15 and 16, National Hispanic Heritage Week to celebrate the contributions and achievements of the diverse cultures within the Hispanic community. The dates were chosen to commemorate two key historic events: Independence Day, honoring the formal signing of the Act of Independence for Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua (September 15, 1821), and Mexico's Independence Day, which denotes the beginning of the struggle against Spanish control (September 16, 1810). It was not until 1988 that the event was expanded to a month-long period, which includes El Dia de la Raza on October 12, celebrating the influences of the people who came after Christopher Columbus and the multicultural, multiethnic society that evolved as a result; Chile's Independence Day on September 18 (El Dieciocho); and Belize's Independence Day on September 21. Each year a different theme for the month is selected and a poster is created to reflect that theme.

October: National Disability Employment Awareness Month

Authority: *Executive Order 13187*

Congress, to help disabled veterans, designated the first week of October as National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week in 1945. Seventeen years later, the word "physically" was removed from the phrase to recognize the needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. In the 1970s, a shift in disability public policy led to further amendments. For the first time, it was viewed as discriminatory to exclude or segregate people because of a disability, and activists were fighting strongly for legal revisions. As a result, the U.S. saw changes such as the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990 and the designation, by presidential proclamation, of a full month to increase public awareness of those with disabilities and appreciate the capabilities of the 30 million people in the U.S. of working-age who are disabled. Various programs throughout the month headed by The Office of Disability Employment Policy emphasize specific employment barriers that still need to be addressed and eliminated.

November: National American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month

Authority: Presidential Proclamation and Executive Order 13270

In 1976, Congress designated a week in October to celebrate Native American Awareness Week. The week served as recognition for the great influence American Indians have had upon the U.S. Yearly legislation was enacted to continue the tradition until August of 1990 when President Bush approved the designation of November as National American Indian Heritage Month. Each year a similar proclamation is issued. President Clinton noted in 1996, "Throughout our history, American Indian and Alaska Native peoples have been an integral part of the American character. Against all odds, America's first peoples have endured, and they remain a vital cultural, political, social, and moral presence." November is an appropriate month for the celebration because it is traditionally a time when many American Indians hold fall harvest and world-renewal ceremonies, powwows, dances, and various feasts. The holiday recognizes hundreds of different tribes and approximately 250 languages and celebrates the history, tradition, and values of American Indians. National American Indian Heritage Month serves as a reminder of the positive effect native peoples have had on the cultural development and growth of the U.S., as well as the struggles and challenges they have faced.