Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Education Pre-K -12

BILL: SB 356

INTRODUCER: Senator Berman and others

SUBJECT: Holocaust Remembrance Day

DATE: February 28, 2025   REVISED:

ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1. Sabitsch	Bouck	ED	**Pre-meeting**
2.		RC	

I.   Summary:

SB 356 establishes Holocaust Remembrance Day. Specifically, the bill:
- Requires the Governor to annually proclaim January 27th as "Holocaust Remembrance Day."
- Permits the day to be suitably observed in public schools, the Capitol, and elsewhere as designated by the Governor.
- Permits instruction to be delivered on the designated day on the harmful impacts of the Holocaust and anti-Semitism as well as the positive impacts of the Jewish community on humanity.

The bill takes effect on July 1, 2025.

II.   Present Situation:

Legal Holidays and Observances

Chapter 683, F.S., provides designations for legal holidays and special observances. Special observances are also found in other parts of Florida law. Recognition of a legal holiday or special observance may apply statewide or may be limited to a particular region. For example, "Gasparilla Day"[1] is a legal holiday observed only in Hillsborough County, while "Bill of Rights Day,"[2] if issued by the Governor, is observed throughout the state. Depending on the holiday or special observance, certain actions may be required to be performed for the commemoration or observance of the date, day, or month. For example, Florida law recognizes the month of September as "American Founders' Month,"[3] urging, but not requiring, all civic, fraternal, and religious organizations and public and private educational institutions to recognize this occasion. In contrast, the last full week of classes in September is designated as "Celebrate Freedom

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[1] Section 683.08, F.S.
[2] Section 683.25, F.S.
[3] Section 683.1455, F.S.

Week,"[4] in which public schools are required to include at least three hours of grade-appropriate instruction related to the meaning and importance of the Declaration of Independence in social studies classes.[5]

There are 27 legal holidays[6] established in law and 35 special observances.[7] The state recognizes nine paid holidays that are observed by all state branches and agencies.[8]

The Holocaust

The Holocaust (1933-1945) was the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of 6 million European Jews and others by the Nazi German regime and its allies and collaborators. At the beginning of Nazi rule, Dictator Adolf Hitler used the government to target and exclude Jews from German society. Among other anti-Semitic measures, the Nazi German regime enacted discriminatory laws and organized violence targeting Germany's Jews. The Holocaust is also sometimes referred to as "the Shoah," the Hebrew word for "catastrophe".[9]

The Nazis falsely accused Jews of causing Germany's social, economic, political, and cultural problems. In particular, they blamed them for Germany's defeat in World War I (1914–1918). Some Germans were receptive to these Nazi claims. Anger over the loss of the war and the economic and political crises that followed contributed to increasing antisemitism in German society. The instability of Germany under the Weimar Republic (1918–1933), the fear of communism, and the economic shocks of the Great Depression also made many Germans more open to Nazi ideas, including antisemitism.[10]

However, the Nazis did not invent antisemitism. Antisemitism is an old and widespread prejudice that has taken many forms throughout history. In Europe, it dates back to ancient times. In the Middle Ages (500–1400), prejudices against Jews were primarily based in early Christian belief and thought, particularly the myth that Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus. Suspicion and discrimination rooted in religious prejudices continued in early modern Europe (1400–1800). At that time, leaders in much of Christian Europe isolated Jews from most aspects of economic, social, and political life. This exclusion contributed to stereotypes of Jews as outsiders. As Europe became more secular, many places lifted most legal restrictions on Jews. This, however, did not mean the end of antisemitism. In addition to religious antisemitism, other types of antisemitism took hold in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries. These new forms included economic, nationalist, and racial antisemitism. In the 19th century, antisemites falsely claimed that Jews were responsible for many social and political ills in modern industrial society. Theories of race, eugenics, and Social Darwinism falsely justified these hatreds. Nazi prejudice

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[4] Section 1003.421, F.S.

[5] *Id.*

[6] There are 21 state legal holidays, three judicial circuit court legal holidays, and three county legal holidays. Sections 683.01, 683.08, 683.09, 683.12, and 683.19, F.S.

[7] Sections 683.04 - 683.336, F.S.

[8] Section 110.117(1), F.S. Paid state holidays include: New Year's Day, the Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veterans' Day, Thanksgiving Day, the Friday after Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day.

[9] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Introduction to the Holocaust*, https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/introduction-to-the-holocaust (last visited Feb 20, 2025).

[10] *Id.*

against Jews drew upon all of these elements, but especially racial antisemitism. Racial antisemitism is the discriminatory idea that Jews are a separate and inferior race.[11]

The Nazi persecution of Jews became radicalized with the culminated plan known as the "Final Solution to the Jewish Question." The "Final Solution" came to fruition during World War II, with mass shootings and gas poisoning killing centers in concentration camps. About 6 million Jews and some 5 million others, targeted for racial, political, ideological, and behavioral reasons, died in the Holocaust, more than 1 million of those who perished were children.[12]

Commemoration of the Holocaust

The United Nations (UN) General Assembly designated January 27, the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, as International Holocaust Remembrance Day. On this annual day of commemoration, the UN urges every member state to honor the 6 million Jewish victims of the Holocaust and millions of other victims of Nazism and to develop education programs to help prevent future genocides.[13]

Holocaust Education in Florida

In 2020, the Legislature directed the Department of Education (DOE) to develop standards for Holocaust Education.[14] The DOE worked closely with the Commissioner of Education's Task Force on Holocaust Education and Florida teachers to develop content-rich and developmentally appropriate standards. In the process, DOE received and considered comments from state and nationally recognized Holocaust educational organizations, Florida educators, school administrators, representatives of the Florida College System and state universities, business and industry leaders, and the public.[15]

In July 2021, the State Board of Education (SBE) adopted the updated State Standards for Social Studies, incorporating revised civics and government standards[16] and new standards for grades 5-12 for Holocaust education for which instruction began in 2023-2024.[17]

Required instruction on the Holocaust (1933-1945) must include the history of the systematic annihilation of European Jews and other groups by Nazi Germany, a watershed event in the history of humanity, and be taught in a manner that leads to an investigation of human behavior, an understanding of the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping, and an examination of what it means to be a responsible and respectful person, for the purposes of encouraging tolerance of diversity in a pluralistic society and for nurturing and protecting democratic values

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[11] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Introduction to the Holocaust*, https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/introduction-to-the-holocaust (last visited February 20, 2025).
[12] *Id.*
[13] United Nations General Assembly Resolution 60/7. *See also*, United Nations, *Outreach Programme on the Holocaust*, https://www.un.org/en/holocaustremembrance/observance/ (last visited February 20, 2025).
[14] Chapter 2020-88, s. 5, Laws of Fla.
[15] Florida Department of Education, *Commissioner of Education's Task Force on Holocaust Education*, https://www.fldoe.org/holocausteducation/ (last visited Feb 20, 2025).
[16] Chapter 2019-150, s.1, Laws of Fla.
[17] Florida Department of Education, *Next Generation Sunshine State Standards – Social Studies, 2021*, *available at* https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/19975/urlt/5-3.pdf.

and institutions, including the policy, definition, and historical and current examples of anti-Semitism and the prevention of anti-Semitism.[18]

Each school district must annually certify and provide evidence to the DOE that it has met the instructional requirements on Holocaust education. In addition, the DOE may contract with any state or nationally-recognized Holocaust educational organizations to develop training for instructional personnel and grade-appropriate classroom resources to support the developed curriculum.[19]

Florida recognizes the second week in November as Holocaust Education Week, which coincided with the anniversary of Kristallnacht, November 9-10, 1938. Kristallnacht is widely recognized as a precipitating event that led to the Holocaust.[20] The DOE has created a portal dedicated to Holocaust Education Week, which offers commemoration resources, educational programs, and materials concerning the Holocaust, for school districts, teachers, parents, and the general public.[21]

III.   Effect of Proposed Changes:

SB 356 creates s. 683.196, F.S., to require the Governor to annually proclaim January 27th to be "Holocaust Remembrance Day" and allows the day to be suitably observed in public schools and at the state capital and other locations designated by the Governor.

The bill specifies that if January 27th falls on a day that is not a school day, Holocaust Remembrance Day may be observed in schools on the following school day or on a school day designated by the local district school board.

The bill permits instruction about the harmful impacts on humanity of the Holocaust and anti-Semitism as well as the positive impacts of the Jewish community on humanity. The instruction may be delivered on Holocaust Remembrance Day. The bill does not specify if such instruction is to be based on state academic standards or required instruction under s. 1003.42, F.S., for Holocaust education.

This bill is effective July 1, 2025.

IV.   Constitutional Issues:

A.   Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B.   Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

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[18] Section 1003.42(2)(g)1., F.S.
[19] Section 1003.42(2)(g)1., F.S.
[20] Section 1003.42(2)(g)2., F.S.
[21] Florida Department of Education, *Holocaust Education Week*, https://www.fldoe.org/holocausteducation/holo-ed-week.stml (last visited Feb 20, 2025).

C.   Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D.   State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E.   Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

V.   Fiscal Impact Statement:

A.   Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B.   Private Sector Impact:

None.

C.   Government Sector Impact:

None.

VI.   Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII.   Related Issues:

None.

VIII.   Statutes Affected:

The bill creates section 683.196 of the Florida Statutes.

IX.   Additional Information:

A.   Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:
(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B.   Amendments:

None.