



**House  
Legislative  
Analysis  
Section**

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## HONOR PEARL HARBOR DAY

### House Bill 5638 as introduced First Analysis (5-9-00)

**Sponsor: Rep. Janet Kukuk**  
**Committee: Veterans Affairs**

#### ***THE APPARENT PROBLEM:***

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, killing 2,335 American servicemen and servicewomen and injuring another 1,143 servicepeople. On the next day, Congress declared war on Japan, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in his war message to Congress that day, said that December 7, 1941, was "a date which will live in infamy." With the entry of the United States into World War II, the course of the war, and of world history, was irrevocably changed. However, as survivors of World War II continue to age and die, fewer and fewer people in our society have living memories of that historic day, and it appears that fewer and fewer young people understand the importance of the day. Legislation has been introduced that would address this issue.

#### ***THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:***

The bill would create a new act to designate December 7 as "Pearl Harbor Day." The bill would state that the legislature recognized "the enormous sacrifice made by the 2,335 servicemen and servicewomen who gave their lives in the defense of this nation during the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Another 1,143 servicemen and servicewomen were injured during the attack. The legislature further recognizes that the attack on Pearl Harbor changed the course of history by bringing the United States into the war with Japan and Germany. In commemoration of this historic and tragic attack, the legislature declares that December 7 of each year shall be known as 'Pearl Harbor Day'." The bill also states that "the legislature [would] encourage individuals, governmental and educational institutions, and community organizations to pause on Pearl Harbor day and reflect upon the courage and sacrifice of those who died or were injured in that attack."

#### ***FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:***

According to the House Fiscal Agency, the bill has no fiscal implications. (4-18-00)

#### ***ARGUMENTS:***

##### ***For:***

The bill would afford some long-overdue recognition of the enormous sacrifice made by the 2,335 American servicemen and servicewomen who lost their lives -- and the 1,143 service people who were injured -- in the December 7, 1941 Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. The bombing of Pearl Harbor was a pivotal event in World War II, and so in world history, because it was that attack that finally brought the United States into the war with Japan and Germany that had started in Europe with the 1939 invasion of Poland by Germany. Too many people are forgetting the importance of this day, particularly as the veterans of that war die and the younger generations are left without the living history provided by these veterans. The bill would help counteract this erosion of the memory of the importance of this date in history by recognizing it in law, and by encouraging individuals, governmental, and educational institutions and community organizations to pay honor to the courage and sacrifice of those servicemen and women who died or were injured in the historic attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

##### ***Against:***

The bill does not go far enough. Instead of just "encouraging" individuals, government and educational institutions, and community organizations "to pause on Pearl Harbor Day and reflect upon the courage and sacrifice of those who died or were injured in the attack," the legislature could make December 7 an official holiday. Unless the day is an official holiday, it

seems unlikely that there will be widespread recognition of the importance of this day in history, let alone reflection on the courage and sacrifice of those who died or were injured in the attack on Pearl Harbor.

***POSITIONS:***

The American Legion Post No. 4 (in Macomb County) supports the bill. (5-4-00)

The Department of Military and Veteran Affairs has no position on the bill. (5-4-00)

Analyst: S. Ekstrom

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.