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H.B. NO. 2475

A Bill for an Act Relating to State Holidays.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that it is important for the State's residents to learn about Hawaii's culture and history. In 1843, King Kamehameha III established La Hoihoi Ea, also known as Restoration Day, as the first national holiday in the Hawaiian Kingdom. Historically celebrated on July 31st, La Hoihoi Ea marked the restoration of the Hawaiian Kingdom's government after the British ambassador and a British Navy captain illegally seized control.

In 1840, Mr. Richard Charlton, Hawaii's first British ambassador, arrived in the islands and began illegally claiming certain land on Oahu. When Kamehameha I rejected the claims, Charlton left Hawaii, intending to return to England, via Mexico, so he could argue his claim to the land before Britain's Foreign Office. While in Mexico, Charlton met Lord George Paulet, a British Navy captain, and persuaded Paulet to travel with him to Hawaii to investigate his claims. Once there, Paulet seized military control of the government and had all Hawaiian flags lowered and burned in a five-month occupation that became known as the "Paulet Affair".

In light of Paulet's actions, the king sent diplomatic envoys Timoteo Haalilio and William Richards to England to present their side of the issue, ultimately gaining favor with Britain and clearing the way for removal of Paulet. Admiral Richard Thomas would later be dispatched to Hawaii, where he would remove Paulet and correct his unwarranted transgressions against the Hawaiian Kingdom and its people.

The legislature finds that, on July 31, 1843, subjects of the kingdom gathered on the grounds of what is now known as Thomas Square on the island of Oahu to witness Admiral Thomas officially restore the kingdom's government and Kamehameha I as king. Later that day, at Kawaihau Church, the king spoke the words that would become the motto of the monarchy and in 1959 the official motto of the State of Hawaii: "Ua Mau ke Ea o ka Aina i ka Pono", or "The life of the land is perpetuated in righteousness". The commemoration of the events that occurred on this day would come to be known as La Hoihoi Ea, or Restoration Day, the kingdom's first national holiday.

After being removed as an official holiday, many would continue to remember and celebrate it in small pockets throughout the islands until it went into obscurity. Today, La Hoihoi Ea Honolulu works in partnership with the Honolulu mayor's office on culture and the arts to plan events throughout the month of July to share the importance of this day and honor upstanding members of the Hawaiian community.

The legislature notes that there have been other efforts to recognize King Kamehameha III's accomplishments and to restore official celebrations of La Hoihoi Ea. On June 16, 2015, the county council for the county of Hawaii unanimously passed Resolution No. 185-15, Draft 2, requesting the legislature to designate July 31 as La Hoihoi Ea, or Restoration Day. On July 31, 2018, the city and county of Honolulu marked the 175th anniversary of La Hoihoi Ea by installing a twelve-foot tall bronze statue of King Kamehameha III in Thomas Square park. The installation includes the state motto and Hawaii's flag.

Annual gatherings take place in Waianae and Waimanalo on the island of Oahu, in Hamakua and Waimea on the island of Hawaii, and in Lahaina on the island of Maui. A small remembrance ceremony is also held each year in New York. The legislature believes that, given the strong interest in recognizing La Hoihoi Ea, the date should be recognized as a special day of observance rather than a state holiday.

Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish July 31 of each year as La Hoihoi Ea to recognize the accomplishments of King Kamehameha III in restoring the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Hawaii and honor upstanding members of the Hawaiian community.

SECTION 2. Chapter 8, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

§8- La Hoihoi Ea. July 31 of each year shall be known and designated as La Hoihoi Ea to recognize the accomplishments of King Kamehameha III in restoring the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Hawaii and honor upstand-

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ing members of the Hawaiian community. La Hoihoi Ea is not and shall not be construed to be a state holiday.”

SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored.¹

SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

(Approved June 17, 2022.)

Note

1. Edited pursuant to HRS §23G-16.5.