

New Excused Absence for Student Participation in Political or Civic Event and Other School Calendar Updates

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There have been several recent updates regarding authorized student absences and school calendars. First, California Senate Bill (SB) 955 adds engagement in a civic or political event as an authorized excused absence for middle school or high school students, effective January 1, 2023.

This bill modifies Education Code section 48205 and defines a civic or political event as including, but not limited to:

- voting
- candidate speeches
- poll working
- political forums
- strikes
- civic forums
- public commenting
- town halls

For an absence to be excused due to political or civic engagement, a middle school or high school student must provide notification to the school ahead of the absence. Under SB 955, students are only allowed one excused absence for political or civic engagement per school year. However, additional absences may be excused at the discretion of school administrators.

As with other excused absences outlined in Education Code section 48205, students absent due to engagement in a civic or political event must be given reasonable time to complete, for full credit, all assignments and tests missed during the absence.

In other matters related to the school calendar, Juneteenth was incorporated into the Education Code as a day community colleges and public schools are required to close. Governor Newsom also signed AB 1801 which permits, but does not require, schools to close on April 24 to recognize the Armenian Genocide. (See [2022 Client News Brief Number 52](#).) Finally, the Governor signed AB 2596 which designates Lunar New Year as a State holiday but does not authorize absences or school closures.

Takeaways

California middle and high school students may now be excused from one day of school each year to participate in a political or civic event. Schools must close in recognition of Juneteenth and may close for Genocide Remembrance Day. Finally,

Lunar New Year is now a State holiday, although that does not affect the school calendar or authorize student absences.

Podcast Information

To hear about these and other new laws affecting students, listen to the discussion among Lozano Smith attorneys Ruth Mendyk, Joshua Whiteside and Nisha Dale on the recent podcast episode, Student Legislative Update 2023.

If you have any questions about these and other new laws affecting students, please contact the authors of this Client News Brief or an attorney at one of our [eight offices](#) located statewide. You can also subscribe to our [podcasts](#), follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) or download our [mobile app](#)