

Veterans Day History

Veterans Day is an official United States holiday that honors people who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces, also known as veterans. It is a federal holiday that is observed on November 11. It coincides with other holidays such as Armistice Day and Remembrance Day, which are celebrated in other parts of the world and also mark the anniversary of the end of World War I. (Major hostilities of World War I were formally ended at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918, when the Armistice with Germany went into effect.)

Veterans Day is not to be confused with Memorial Day; Veterans Day celebrates the service of all U.S. military veterans, while Memorial Day is a day of remembering the men and women who died while serving.

U.S. President Woodrow Wilson first proclaimed Armistice Day for November 11, 1919. In proclaiming the holiday, he said:



"To us in America, the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory, both because of the thing from which it has freed us and because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations."

The United States Congress passed a concurrent resolution seven years later on June 4, 1926, requesting that President Calvin Coolidge issue another proclamation to observe November 11 with appropriate ceremonies. A

Congressional Act approved May 13, 1938, made the 11th of November in each year a legal holiday: "a day to be dedicated to the cause of world peace and to be thereafter celebrated and known as Armistice Day."

In 1945, World War II veteran Raymond Weeks from Birmingham, Alabama, had the idea to expand Armistice Day to celebrate all veterans, not just those who died in World War I. Weeks led a delegation to Gen. Dwight Eisenhower, who supported the idea of National Veterans Day. Weeks led the first national celebration in 1947 in Alabama and annually until his death in 1985.



President Reagan honored Weeks at the White House with the Presidential Citizenship Medal in 1982 as the driving force for the national holiday. Elizabeth Dole, who prepared the briefing for President Reagan, determined Weeks as the "Father of Veterans Day."

U.S. Representative Ed Rees from Emporia, Kansas, presented a bill establishing the holiday through Congress. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, also from Kansas, signed the bill into law on May 26, 1954.

Congress amended this act on June 1, 1954, replacing "Armistice" with "Veterans," and it has been known as Veterans Day since.

The National Veterans Award, created in 1954, also started in Birmingham. Congressman Rees of Kansas was honored in Alabama as the first recipient of the award for his support offering legislation to make Veterans Day a federal holiday, which marked nine years of effort by Raymond Weeks. Weeks conceived the idea in 1945, petitioned Gen. Eisenhower in 1946, and led the first Veterans Day celebration in 1947 (keeping the official name Armistice Day until Veterans Day was legal in 1954).

Although originally scheduled for celebration on November 11 of every year, starting in 1971 in accordance with the Uniform Monday Holiday Act, Veterans Day was moved to the fourth Monday of October. In 1978, it was moved back to

its original celebration on November 11. While the legal holiday remains on November 11, if that date happens to be on a Saturday or Sunday, then organizations that formally observe the holiday will normally be closed on the adjacent Friday or Monday, respectively.

Observance

Because it is a federal holiday, some American workers and many students have Veterans Day off from work or school. Non-essential federal government offices are closed. No mail is delivered. All federal workers are paid for the holiday; those who are required to work on the holiday sometimes receive holiday pay for that day in addition to their wages.

Free meals for Veterans are offered in many fast food and casual dinner restaurant chains. In his Armistice Day address to Congress, Wilson was sensitive to the psychological toll of the lean War years: "Hunger does not breed reform; it breeds madness," he remarked. As Veterans Day and the birthday of the United States Marine Corps (November 10, 1775) are only one day apart, that branch of the Armed Forces customarily observes both occasions as a 96-hour liberty period.



Veterans Day

While the holiday is commonly printed as Veteran's Day or Veterans' Day in calendars and advertisements (spellings that are grammatically acceptable), the United States government has declared that the attributive (no apostrophe) rather than the possessive case is the official spelling.

Adapted from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veterans_Day , <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/legalcode>