



National Holidays

Memorial Day

Memorial Day, May 30 (traditional), is a sacred day to all war veterans. America's collective consciousness demands that all citizens be reminded of the deaths of their fellow countrymen during wartime. By honoring the nation's war dead, we preserve their memory and their service and sacrifice. All U.S. flags should be at half-staff in the morning hours. At noon, they should be raised to full-staff.

Independence Day

On July 4, 1776, the signers of the Declaration of Independence boldly asserted that all are "created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." With these words, our forefathers formed a new nation and put forth a vision of liberty and democracy. Every Fourth of July, Americans celebrate this pivotal moment in our history, which set into motion the development of a land of freedom and opportunity.

Patriots Day

Those whom we lost September 11, 2001, will forever hold a cherished place in our hearts and in the history of our nation. By a joint resolution approved December 18, 2001, (Public Law 107-89), Congress authorized the president to designate September 11 of each year as "Patriot Day" to perpetuate the memory of those who perished in the attack on America, to pursue peace and justice in the world and security at home. Appropriate ceremonies and activities include a moment of silence beginning at 8:46 a.m. EDT, remembrance services and candlelight vigils. Flags should be flown at half-staff.

Veterans Day

Veterans Day is an opportunity to publicly commemorate the contributions of living veterans. Armistice Day officially received its name in America in 1926 through a congressional resolution. It became a national holiday 12 years later by similar congressional action.

If World War I had been "the war to end all wars," November 11 might be still called Armistice Day. Realizing that peace was equally preserved by veterans of World War II and Korea, Congress decided to make the day an occasion to honor all those who have served America. In 1954 President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a bill proclaiming November 11 as Veterans Day. (Historically, the first Veterans Day parade was held in 1953 in Emporia, Kansas.)

A law passed in 1968 changed the national commemoration of Veterans Day to the fourth Monday in October. It soon became apparent, however, that November 11 was a date of historic significance to many Americans. Therefore, in 1978 Congress returned the observance to its traditional date.

POW/MIA Commemoration Day

POW/MIA commemoration day honors the commitments and the sacrifices made by our nation's prisoners of war and those who are still missing in action. By custom, it is on the third Friday in September. National POW/MIA Recognition Day is one of the six days specified by law on which the black POW/MIA flag shall be flown over federal facilities and cemeteries, post offices and military installations.