



Eric Garcetti, Mayor
Rushmore D. Cervantes, Interim General Manager

INTERDEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 14, 2017

TO: Justin Wesson
Council District 10

FROM: Francisco Ortega
Human Relations Advocate

REGARDING: **HISTORY OF HOW AND WHEN CITY HOLIDAYS WERE ESTABLISHED**

The United States has established the following 11 permanent federal holidays established by law, listed in the order they appear in the calendar: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday, Inauguration Day (every four years following a presidential election), George Washington's Birthday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day. Although frequently called public or national holidays, these celebrations are only legally applicable to federal employees and the District of Columbia, as the states individually decide their own legal holidays.

The first four congressionally designated federal holidays were created in 1870, when Congress granted paid time off to federal workers in the District of Columbia for New Year's Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day. In 1880, George Washington's Birthday was included. In 1885, Congress extended holiday coverage for some holidays to all federal employees. Although Thanksgiving Day was included in the first holiday bill of 1870, it was not until 1941 that Congress specifically designated the fourth Thursday of November as the official date. Since 1888, Congress has added six federal holidays.

Attached is a history from various sources online of the holidays observed in the City and the history of their establishment. Please let me know if you have any questions.

cc: Julie O'Leary
Abigail Marquez

Holiday	Date Established	History	Challenges/Obstacles	Resolution/Established
<p>New Year’s Day (January 1)</p>	<p>1870</p>	<p>In the U.S., New Year’s Day has its origin in Roman times, when sacrifices were offered to Janus, the two-faced Roman deity who looked back on the past and forward to the future.</p>		
<p>Martin Luther King Jr.’s Birthday (the third Monday in January)</p>	<p>1986</p>	<p>In addition to his work in civil rights, Dr. King also spoke up for the disadvantaged and impoverished. His stance of nonviolence helped to shape the way movements have been structured around the world. His day serves as a reminder that there is still work to be done if a society in which everyone is equal and respected is to be achieved.</p>	<p>Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina campaigned against the holiday, arguing that King was a communist sympathizer and an unfaithful husband. But prominent figures like King’s wife, Coretta Scott King, and musician Stevie Wonder—who voiced his support in his song “Happy Birthday”—continued to push for his recognition.</p>	<p>When Congress passed a bill designating Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday as a national holiday, Dr. King was granted an honor that until that time had belonged only to George Washington. Dr. King’s birthday was established to be celebrated on the third Monday in January.</p>
<p>President’s Day (the third Monday in February)</p>	<p>1885</p>	<p>While Washington’s Birthday was an unofficial observance for most of the 1800s, it was not until the late 1870s that it became a federal holiday. Senator Steven Wallace Dorsey of Arkansas was the first to propose the measure, and in 1879 President Rutherford B. Hayes signed it into law. The holiday initially only applied to the District of Columbia, but in 1885 it was expanded to the whole country. At the time, Washington’s Birthday joined four other nationally recognized federal bank holidays and was the first to celebrate the life of an individual American. Martin Luther King Jr. Day, signed into law in 1983, would be the second.</p>	<p>Presidents’ Day is an American holiday celebrated on the third Monday in February. Originally established in 1885 in recognition of President George Washington, it is still officially called <i>Washington’s Birthday</i> by the federal government. Traditionally celebrated on February 22—Washington’s actual day of birth—the holiday became popularly known as <i>Presidents’ Day</i> after it was moved as part of the 1971’s Uniform Monday Holiday Act, an attempt to create more three-day weekends for the nation’s workers. While several states still have individual holidays honoring the birthdays of Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and other figures, Presidents’ Day is now popularly viewed as a day to celebrate all U.S. presidents past and present.</p>	<p>For its part, the federal government has held fast to the original incarnation of the holiday as a celebration of the country’s first president. The third Monday in February is still listed on official calendars as Washington’s Birthday.</p>

Holiday	Date Established	History	Challenges/Obstacles	Resolution/Established
<p>Cesar E. Chavez Birthday (the last Monday in March)</p>	<p>2002</p>	<p>The day commemorates service to the community in honor of Cesar Chavez's life and work. Some state government offices, community colleges, libraries, and public schools are closed. Although it is not a federal holiday, President Obama proclaimed March 31 as Cesar Chavez Day in the U.S., with Americans being urged to "observe this day with appropriate service, community, and educational programs to honor Cesar Chavez's enduring legacy." In addition, there are celebrations in his honor in Arizona, Michigan, Nebraska, and New Mexico and the holiday is observed as a state holiday in California (since 2000), in Texas (2000), and in Colorado (2003), though it is optional in Texas and Colorado and is an official holiday in the city of Phoenix.</p> <p>The California legal holiday set into motion a wave of initiatives resulting in optional and commemorative Cesar Chavez Days in nine additional states (Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Michigan, New Mexico, Texas, Utah, Wisconsin, and Rhode Island.)</p>	<p>Although it is not a federal holiday, President Barack Obama proclaimed March 31 <i>Cesar Chavez Day</i> in the U.S., with Americans being urged to "observe this day with appropriate service, community, and educational programs to honor César Chávez's enduring legacy."</p> <p>In 2002 the City Council considered a recommendation by the Executive Employee Relations Committee (EERC) to replace the Columbus Day holiday with a new City holiday honoring Cesar Chavez (CF 99-1980). The reason cited for the proposed switch was the limited number of days set aside as official paid holidays for City employees and that adding a new holiday would be too cost prohibitive.</p> <p>The Council was unanimous, however, in wanting to maintain Columbus Day as an official holiday while at the same time finding a way to officially commemorate the life of Cesar Chavez. The CAO identified the half-day holiday on December 24 as a possible exchange for the new Chavez holiday to respect both the contributions of Christopher Columbus and Italian-Americans, as well as the legacy of Cesar Chavez. The CAO indicated the extra ½ day of vacation for City employees would not lead to a significant reduction of worker productivity.</p> <p>The Council voted to support exchanging the December 24 half-day holiday for a new full-day City holiday on March 31 to commemorate the birthday of labor and civil rights activist Cesar Chavez and to reaffirm its commitment to honoring the legacy of Los Angeles' Italian-</p>	<p>The legal holiday bill introduced by then State Senator Richard Polanco (Los Angeles-D) was signed into law by then Governor Gray Davis (D) on August 18, 2000. The holiday is celebrated in California on Cesar E. Chavez's birthday March 31st. It is not a federal holiday. It is an observed holiday for City of Los Angeles employees.</p>

Holiday	Date Established	History	Challenges/Obstacles	Resolution/Established
			American community through the continued designation of Christopher Columbus Day as an official City holiday.	
Memorial Day (the last Monday in May)	1971	Memorial Day, an American holiday observed on the last Monday of May, honors men and women who died while serving in the U.S. military. Originally known as <i>Decoration Day</i> , it originated in the years following the Civil War and became an official federal holiday in 1971.	Memorial Day, as Decoration Day gradually came to be known, originally honored only those lost while fighting in the Civil War. But during World War I the United States found itself embroiled in another major conflict, and the holiday evolved to commemorate American military personnel who died in all wars.	Memorial Day become an official U.S. Holiday in 1971
Independence Day (July 4)	1941	The tradition of Independence Day celebrations goes back to the 18th century and the American Revolution (1775-83). In June 1776, representatives of the 13 colonies then fighting in the revolutionary struggle weighed a resolution that would declare their independence from Great Britain. On July 2, 1776, the Continental Congress voted in favor of independence, and two days later its delegates adopted the Declaration of Independence, a historic document drafted by Thomas Jefferson. From 1776 until the present day, July 4th has been celebrated as the birth of American independence.	John Adams believed that July 2nd was the correct date on which to celebrate the birth of American independence, and would reportedly turn down invitations to appear at July 4th events in protest. Adams and Thomas Jefferson both died on July 4, 1826--the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence.	Independence Day became a Federally recognized holiday in 1941—the year the U.S. entered into World War II.
Labor Day (the first Monday in September)	1894	The first governmental recognition of Labor Day came through municipal ordinances passed during 1885-1886. From these, a movement developed to secure state legislation. The first state	The idea of a <i>workingmen's holiday</i> , celebrated on the first Monday in September, caught on in other industrial centers across the country, and many states passed legislation recognizing it. Congress would not legalize the holiday until	Observed on the first Monday in September, Labor Day pays tribute to the contributions and achievements of American

Holiday	Date Established	History	Challenges/Obstacles	Resolution/Established
		<p>bill was introduced into the New York legislature, but the first to become law was passed by Oregon on February 21, 1887. During that year, four more states—Colorado, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York—created the Labor Day holiday by legislative enactment. By the end of the decade, Connecticut, Nebraska, and Pennsylvania had followed suit. By 1894, 23 other states had adopted the holiday in honor of workers, and on June 28 of that year, Congress passed an act making the first Monday in September of each year a legal holiday in the District of Columbia and the territories.</p>	<p>later when a watershed moment in American labor history brought workers' rights squarely into the public's view. On May 11, 1894, employees of the Pullman Palace Car Company in Chicago went on strike to protest wage cuts and the firing of union representatives. The strike became a national issue that disrupted train traffic across the country, prompting Cleveland to dispatch troops to Chicago to end the strike. The confrontation led to riots, and many of the protesters were wounded or killed.</p>	<p>workers. It was created by the labor movement in the late 19th century and became a federal holiday in 1894.</p>
<p>Columbus Day (the second Monday in October)</p>	<p>1937</p>	<p>The first Columbus Day celebration took place in 1792, when New York's Columbian Order—better known as Tammany Hall—held an event to commemorate the historic landing's 300th anniversary. Taking pride in Columbus' birthplace and faith, Italian and Catholic communities in various parts of the country began organizing annual religious ceremonies and parades in his honor. In 1892, President Benjamin Harrison called upon the people of the U.S. to celebrate Columbus Day on the 400th anniversary of the voyage to the Americas. Teachers, preachers, poets and politicians used Columbus Day rituals to</p>	<p>These days, Columbus Day has evolved into a holiday that makes many people feel confused or uncomfortable about what they are <i>celebrating</i> (other than a day off work). Several places in the U.S. have replaced Columbus Day with observances and festivities to respect indigenous populations. South Dakota and cities in California, Minnesota, and Washington celebrate Native American Day or Indigenous Peoples Day instead. Alaska took away the entire holiday altogether.</p>	<p>Columbus Day first became an official state holiday in Colorado in 1906. In 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt proclaimed Columbus Day a national holiday, largely as a result of intense lobbying by the Knights of Columbus, an influential Catholic fraternal benefits organization. Originally observed every October 12, it was fixed to the second Monday in October in 1971.</p>

Holiday	Date Established	History	Challenges/Obstacles	Resolution/Established
		<p>teach ideals of patriotism. These patriotic rituals took themes such as citizenship boundaries, the importance of loyalty to the nation, and celebrating social progress. Many Italian-Americans observe Columbus Day as a celebration of their heritage.</p>		
<p>Veterans Day – (November 11)</p>	<p>1938</p>	<p>Veterans Day originated as <i>Armistice Day</i> on Nov. 11, 1919, the first anniversary of the end of World War I. Congress passed a resolution in 1926 for an annual observance, and November 11 became a national holiday beginning in 1938.</p> <p>Veterans Day is not to be confused with Memorial Day—a common misunderstanding, according to the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs. Memorial Day honors American service members who died in service to their country or as a result of injuries incurred during battle, while Veterans Day pays tribute to all American veterans—living or dead—but especially gives thanks to living veterans who served their country honorably during war or peacetime.</p>	<p>American effort during World War II (1941-1945) saw the greatest mobilization of the U.S. Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force in the nation’s history (more than 16 million people); some 5.7 million more served in the Korean War (1950 to 1953). In 1954, after lobbying efforts by veterans’ service organizations, the 83rd U.S. Congress amended the 1938 act that had made Armistice Day a holiday, striking the word <i>Armistice</i> in favor of <i>Veterans</i>. President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the legislation on June 1, 1954. From then on, November 11 became a day to honor American veterans of all wars.</p>	<p>In 1968, the Uniform Holidays Bill was passed by Congress, which moved the celebration of Veterans Day to the fourth Monday in October. The law went into effect in 1971, but in 1975 President Ford returned Veterans Day to November 11, due to the important historical significance of the date. There are approximately 21 million military veterans in the U.S.</p>
<p>Thanksgiving Day (the fourth Thursday in November)</p>	<p>1863</p>	<p>In 1863, expressing gratitude for a pivotal Union Army victory at Gettysburg, President Abraham Lincoln announces that the nation would celebrate an official Thanksgiving holiday on November 26, 1863. The speech, which was actually written by</p>	<p>Thomas Jefferson, the third president, felt that public demonstrations of piety to a higher power, like that celebrated at Thanksgiving, were inappropriate in a nation based in part on the separation of church and state and subsequent presidents agreed. In fact, no official Thanksgiving proclamation was issued</p>	<p>The fourth Thursday of November remained the annual day of Thanksgiving from 1863 until 1939. Then, at the tail end of the Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, hoping</p>

Holiday	Date Established	History	Challenges/Obstacles	Resolution/Established
		<p>Secretary of State William Seward, declared that the fourth Thursday of every November thereafter would be considered an official U.S. holiday of Thanksgiving. This announcement harkened back to when George Washington was in his first term as the first president in 1789 and the young American nation had only a few years earlier emerged from the American Revolution. At that time, George Washington called for an official celebratory “day of public thanksgiving and prayer.” While Congress overwhelmingly agreed to Washington’s suggestion, the holiday did not yet become an annual event.</p>	<p>by any president between 1815 and 1863.</p> <p>Much like Columbus Day. Thanksgiving is considered by some to be a <i>national day of mourning</i>, as a celebration of the cultural genocide and conquest of Native Americans by colonists. Thanksgiving has long carried a distinct resonance for Native Americans, who see the holiday as an embellished story of "Pilgrims and Natives looking past their differences" to break bread.</p>	<p>to boost the economy by providing shoppers and merchants a few extra days to conduct business between the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, moved Thanksgiving to the next-to-last Thursday in the month instead of the last one (that year November had five Thursdays).</p> <p>In 1941, however, Roosevelt bowed to Congress’ insistence that the fourth Thursday of November be re-set permanently as the official Thanksgiving holiday.</p>
<p>The Friday after Thanksgiving</p>		<p>The day after Thanksgiving is not a public holiday but is a state holiday in almost half the states in the U.S. and is given as a paid day off by around 80% of employers.</p>	<p>The day after Thanksgiving is a day off for some companies and most schools. It is known as <i>Black Friday</i> because it is a popular shopping day.</p> <p>The day after Thanksgiving is also <i>Native American Heritage Day</i>, a day to pay tribute to Native Americans for their many contributions to the U.S.</p>	
<p>Christmas Day (December 25)</p>	<p>1870</p>	<p>The middle of winter has long been a time of celebration around the world. Centuries before the arrival of the man called Jesus, early Europeans celebrated light and birth in the darkest days of winter. Many peoples rejoiced during the winter solstice, when the worst of the winter was behind them and they</p>	<p>The pilgrims, English separatists that came to America in 1620, were even more orthodox in their Puritan beliefs than Cromwell. As a result, Christmas was not a holiday in early America. From 1659 to 1681, the celebration of Christmas was actually outlawed in Boston. Anyone exhibiting the Christmas spirit was fined five shillings. By contrast, in the Jamestown</p>	<p>Christmas was declared a federal holiday in the U.S. on June 26, 1870.</p>

Holiday	Date Established	History	Challenges/Obstacles	Resolution/Established
		<p>could look forward to longer days and extended hours of sunlight. On Christmas, believers attended church, and then celebrated raucously in a drunken, carnival-like atmosphere similar to today's Mardi Gras.</p>	<p>settlement, Captain John Smith reported that Christmas was enjoyed by all and passed without incident.</p>	