



FACT SHEET

Veterans Day History

Veterans Day (originally known as Armistice Day) is an official United States public holiday observed annually on November 11, honoring military veterans, that is, persons who have served in the United States Armed Forces.

It coincides with other holidays including Armistice Day and Remembrance Day which are celebrated in other countries that 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. At the urging of major U.S. veteran organizations, Armistice Day was renamed Veterans Day in 1954.

Veterans Day is distinct from Memorial Day, a U.S. public holiday in May. Veterans Day celebrates the service of all U.S. military veterans, while Memorial Day honors those who died while in military service. There is another military holiday, Armed Forces Day, a U.S. remembrance that also occurs in May, which honors those currently serving in the U.S. military.

Baltimore Parade

In 1945, World War II veteran Raymond Weeks from Birmingham, Ala., 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, Kan., presented a bill establishing the holiday through Congress. President Eisenhower, also from Kansas, signed the bill into law on May 26, 1954. It had been eight and a half years since Weeks held his first Armistice Day celebration for all veterans.

Congress amended the bill on June 1, 1954, replacing *Armistice* with *Veterans*, and it has been known as Veterans Day since. The National Veterans Award was also created in 1954. Congressman Rees of Kansas received the first National Veterans Award in Birmingham for his support offering legislation to make Veterans Day a federal holiday.

Observing the Holiday

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 (October 25, 1971; October 23, 1972; October 22, 1973; October 28, 1974; October 27, 1975; October 25, 1976, and October 24, 1977). 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.

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.

Spelling of 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 Dept. of Veterans Affairs website states that the attributive (no apostrophe) rather than the possessive case is the official spelling, "because it is not a day that *belongs* to veterans, it's a day for honoring all veterans."

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