

The 11 Federal Holidays: What, When, Why, And How These Days Got To Be Holidays - Transcript

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Good afternoon, everyone. Come to the FT LP Academy, we have another terrific webinar for you today. My name is Joe Paskoski from GPO. I'm with my colleague Lara Flint. Today's webinar is titled the 11 federal holidays, what, when, where and why these got to be holidays and with us today is our presenter Jane Canfield and has presented for us in the past and I'm sure will do many in the future. Jane, let me read a little bit about her, she is a coordinator of federal government information and documents and pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico. She has 40 years of expansion the library field. She started her career as a public librarian, moved into school librarian and taught for six years in the Interamerican University graduate school of Library and information sciences, work as a director of the library of the post secondary vocational school and arrived at her current job in 2007. She fell in love with the world of government documents and taken on the special task of promoting documents that exist in other languages especially Spanish as 100% of her users are native Spanish speakers. With that, for the webinar today the 11 federal holidays, what, when, how those days got to be holidays, I will take it over to Jane.

Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome once again to the at the LP Academy. Thank you for attending and I will get started here on the 11 federal holidays, what, when, why and how these days got to be holidays up the tops first thing we need to focus on is how many of you know that my title is incorrect? There are not really 11 federal holidays.

How many are there, really?

There are 12 but Inauguration Day is only celebrated every four years. So most of you are still having 11 federal holidays but during and inaugural year for the President of the United States, there are 12. Okay, United States has established by law at each of these has a law that has there are 12 permanent federal holidays. They are listed here in the order they appear on the calendar. Not the order in which they were made into law.

They are knew yours, Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., Inauguration Day, George Washington's birthday, Memorial day, the latest national holiday, June 19, national Independence Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving day, and Christmas day.

Although the or we call them federal holidays, national holidays, legally they only apply to federal employees in all 50 states and all of the U.S. territories, into the district of Columbia. Each state can legally decide its own holidays. Most states do follow for employees federal holidays, but whether or not they do so is actually legally up to the state. States can also individually determine other holidays within the state. Let's talk about the history of the holidays.

First four congressionally designated federal holidays, created in 1870, 1870 was actually quite a few years after the founding of the United States and the establishment of the United States Constitution. And government, and 1870 or the first four holidays. They were granted as paid leave to federal workers. At that point, only in the District of Columbia, nowhere else. And those holidays where New Year's, Independence Day, Thanksgiving day, and Christmas day. In 1880, George Washington's birthday

was added. In 1885, Congress extended coverage of all of those holidays, those holidays, to all federal employees throughout the United States.

Even though Thanksgiving is included as the first holiday, for many years the date on which Thanksgiving was celebrated was left up to presidential proclamation. Most of the time it was designated as the fourth Thursday of November. Franklin Roosevelt designated it as the third Thursday in November, because he wanted businesses to have an ample Christmas shopping holiday after the Thanksgiving holiday. I think we should probably all laugh about that, given what Black Friday and cyber Monday have turned into. Shopping holidays, so outrage on the part of the public and the Congress about what Franklin Roosevelt, catering to business interests, Congress designated the fourth [Indiscernible - low volume] Thursday as the official Thanksgiving day.

Since 1888, the U.S. Congress has added seven other federal holidays which are decoration date which we now know as Memorial day. And I can remember my grandfather calling it decoration Day. And apparently the reason for that was, it honored war heroes and anyone who had received a medal or award, got out their medal and wore it on that day so that was just an interesting little piece of history trivia then and now we know it as Memorial day.

That was in 1888. Labor Day was designated in 1894. Armistice Day, which is now known as Veterans Day, was designated in 1938,, but originally celebrating the armistice of what was then called the great war, World War I. Inauguration Day was designated in 1957. It is quadrennial and only a federal holiday within the District of Columbia. Columbus Day in 1968, Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. and latest holiday, Juneteenth was declared in 2021.

In 1954, armistice date was brought in to also honor those people who fought in World War II and in the Korean conflict and of course now we said that the Vietnam conflict,, but Armistice Day was officially changed to Veterans Day to honor all of our past military personnel. In 1968, holiday Equus controversial and the uniform Monday holiday act, was set up to provide uniform annual observances. That means we changed Washington's Birthday, Memorial Day and Veterans Day to be Monday holidays in a week that their date was held otherwise or had occurred.

Additionally, the Monday holiday law, established that Columbus Day would be celebrated on the second Monday in October. However, in 1975, veteran straight celebrations were returned to November 11 by Congress. So the days that we celebrate as Monday holidays are currently Washington's Birthday, Memorial Day, Columbus Day, and Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. , which was established after this.

Did I miss something?

No, okay.

If I want to find information on federal holidays, in the catalog of government publications, by search for federal holidays, and the first thing that appears is a Congressional research service report on federal holidays. Evolution and current practice.

Also there appears under holidays the act which amended title V to include Juneteenth as a national Independence Day as a legal public holiday.

Information that I have just presented about the holidays, it is in a Congressional research service report that has had numerous versions, the latest version is version 11, amended in July of 2021 to include the Juneteenth, Juneteenth holiday, the link to the report is here. I would out pulled out interesting parts of the report, the report is very interesting and a nice compilation of information about all of the federal holidays.

Okay, I'm going to take them in calendar order and talk about finding information about each one.

New Year's Day, of course in the United States, New Year's Day is the first of January. In other calendars like most of us are familiar with the Chinese new year, New Year's Day can fall at other times, but for the United States, we celebrate New Year's Day on January 1st of each year.

There is an amazing amount of information on all of these federal holidays within you is a Mech.gov USA.gov.

So I'm highlighting for each one, some of that information. One of the things that came up in New York State that I thought was interesting was from the USDA nutrition education program, Black eyed peas were a traditional New Year's dish and I like a healthy wait to start the new we year, because it might also, in southern Louisiana, black-eyed peas came with ham and bacon added and I suspect that that might have made them a less healthy New Year's dish. Some of you may have other traditions for New Year's meals, but I thought that was interesting. The first thing that came up when I look for New Year's was the tradition of eating black-eyed peas.

And other information from census.gov, information from the national Library of medicine, about the new year being a way to start something new to break a routine. Information on New Year's Day climate from the National Weather Service. Interesting sources of different kinds of information on New Year's, so moving on to being at work and waiting for the next federal holiday, the next holiday on the calendar is the Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. . It is celebrated on the third Monday of January. The information here is from the catalog publications at it is the link, it is the information to the act that amended title V to make Martin Luther King's birthday a legal, public holiday, and this lot number is included here.

All of the pictures including the one of Martin Luther King Jr., pictures that I used in the webinar are from images that are available from USA today. Inauguration Day, Inauguration Day makes up the 12th holiday, federal holiday every four years, okay? Interesting information here. The first one is from the catalog of government publications. This is the cataloging that is done on the original act of what the house committee did to change the date of Inauguration Day from the fourth of March, which was its original date, to the 20th of January.

The last President inaugurated on the fourth of March was Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1933.

Presidents since have been inaugurated on January 20. I remember learning in a history class in high school that the reason for the date change was that originally it took a significant amount of more time to count votes to get out the word of who had been elected President and to allow for that President to use transportation means like horses and buggies and chain trains that were available to actually arrive in Washington, D.C. In time for the inauguration. I kind of wondered why or I understand changing it, you start out the new year with the new President, but March 4th would be a much happier day, I think,

climate-wise in Washington, D.C., most of the time, but nonetheless, the date was changed to January 20th.

Other interesting information that I found again in the catalog of government publications, the national park service put out, over the years, the series of Jr. Ranger activity books on the various presidential inaugurations. I did not see one for the latest last two inauguration so I don't know if they have stopped doing this, but they are very interesting. There is information about prior presidents, word search puzzles, very useful tool, for teaching about presidential inaugurations.

There is a U.S. presidential inauguration resource guide available online, published in 2000, so it does not include any inaugurations since then, but it is historically interesting to take a look at it in terms of resources available about presidential inaugurations.

Okay, the birthday of George Washington, okay. This one is probably pretty obvious why did we celebrate George Washington. We currently call this in most places Presidents' Day, because we have come to include other presidents, other presidents as being important, in celebration of all of our presidents, originally it was George Washington's that was celebrated on George Washington's birthday. It is now the third Monday in February. Here in Puerto Rico, the Puerto Rican legislature tacked on to this Presidents' Day and they have our ancestors. So we get to celebrate Presidents' Day and all of ours ancestors in Puerto Rico as well. Interesting accommodation there of holidays.

As I said earlier, each state and territory has to celebrate these day, to not celebrate them, and to include other days of their own state holidays. Information on George Washington, and this is from USA.gov, there is the U.S. Park Service that has information, the national archive has information, the Whitehouse.gov website has information and the Valley Forge national historical monument, which is part of the National Park Service, all include information about celebrating the birthday's or birthday of George Washington.

Memorial day, next up on the calendar in the month of May. It is the day in which we remember those people who have died defending the United States in our various conflicts. Throughout the years. This particular information came from the Park Service in which they have information about the Korean War veteran Memorial and Lincoln Memorial and the national Mall memorial park, Vietnam veterans of war and the World War II Memorial and it is available from the National Park Service at this address. It begins with a quote from Delano Roosevelt that I have heard before and that I like, those who have long enjoyed such privileges as we enjoy may forget in time that men have died to win them.

Frequently we will get that Memorial Day as the beginning of summer, parades. We get out and barbecue things, but Memorial day, when it was set up, as Decoration Day.

It was to express our gratitude for those who gave their lives in service to the United States. Juneteenth, next up on our calendar. That we have federal holidays in May, June and July.

Juneteenth national Independence Day. Latest created holiday in 2021, looking to the public for, hundred 17th Congress, lost 70, which created the holiday.

There was a congressional research service report, again, the link is here. Explaining the federal holiday, and it explains June 17, President Biden signed the Juneteenth national Independence Day, past the Senate and passed the House of Representatives. Amends title V to create another national holiday. It

displays and explains the bills and process that Congress went through, so it is an interesting report to look at four how Juneteenth has come to be our latest federal holiday.

Independence Day. Fourth of July. Obviously most, if you don't know Independence Day celebrates the Fourth of July, 1776, and is the anniversary of the founding of the United States, then you are probably a recent immigrant or maybe you are old enough to have lost your memory. Independent state is pretty famous, I think, for all of us.

There is lots of information and USA.gov about and from different agencies about Independence Day. National Park Service has lovely information. The voice of America has information which explains what July 4th is and why we celebrate it and the immigration service, USCIS has information explained to immigrants or candidates for citizenship what Independence Day is and why we celebrate Independence Day.

Labor Day. Interesting. I can remember thinking as a child if we don't have to go to work or school, why do we call it Labor Day? Originally it was meant that Labor Day was to celebrate all of the workers and laborers of the United States. The things that they do in terms of keeping the government running, keeping our economy running, educating children, so Labor Day, it was to celebrate our labor, not just another free day off. The first Labor Day was celebrated in New York City on Tuesday, September 5th. Was not a Monday holiday. 1882.

There is interesting information here for that. The first celebration of Labor Day, from the Department of Labor. Information, actually dealing with Labor Day, information from the senses on Labor Day which says that as early as 1882 in New York, Labor Day was celebrated. And the first Labor Day from the house.gov site, President Grover Cleveland signed into law Labor Day as a national holiday.

Columbus Day. Here in Puerto Rico there is a Puerto Rican discovery day, which is celebrated on November 19, because November 19 is the day on which Columbus supposedly touched land in Puerto Rico. So must have taken him from October 12 until November 19 to get from the United States to Puerto Rico. Actually think that workprint to separate journeys, but Columbus Day is another of our federal holidays, has to do, in this case, not with the founding of the country, but with the discovery of the country.

There is information here explaining what Columbus Day is. In this case, President Biden claimed Columbus Day, most of our presidents do proclaim these holidays, and I'm just glancing at the chat a question, has there been a name change from Columbus Day to indigenous people state?

Officially in terms of federal holidays, the title Columbus Day has not been changed. However, other states are choosing to call it indigenous peoples day in honor of the indigenous people who were present in the United States when Columbus landed. Officially no, unofficially indigenous people stay is being used in a number of different states.

Here in Puerto Rico we sort of ignore Columbus Day, November 19, which was the discovery of Puerto Rico and frequently celebrated as the date of the [Indiscernible - low volume] indigenous people, present on the island of Puerto Rico. So Veterans Day, next holiday up, November 11. Veteran state was originally Armistice Day and celebrated the armistice of the first world war. Was changed to Veterans Day to reflect the service of many other members of the military in the other conflicts. In which the

United States has been involved. This is another congressional research service report, having to do with resources and speeches and information about Veterans Day.

Thanksgiving, fourth Thursday of November. Thanksgiving originally was not necessarily rated on the fourth Thursday of Thanksgiving as I mentioned earlier. Now it is always the fourth Thursday of November. It is an official federal holiday. There is a record here from the catalog of government publications, taking you to information on celebrating Thanksgiving. There is other information here from golfinfo.gov, about things giving and there are classroom celebration material available from the library of Congress for Thanksgiving and USA.gov when I did a search for Thanksgiving and went to images there are numerous pictures of the presidential Gardens. So I chose this one, because the turkey is obviously protesting there. They are being petted, pardoned, but there are numerous other pictures of it and it is a thing that every year a particular farm raises and grows two turkeys, which are taking to the White House and the President has to look at them and decide which one to pardon.

What usually happens is that they both get pardoned and they get to go live long lives in a petting zoo, but it is an interesting thing, the United States President pardons a turkey every Thanksgiving.

Christmas day. Last of our federal holidays. It is interesting to me that in terms of federal holidays the only federal holiday which has significant religious ties is that of Christmas. Thanksgiving of course somewhat, because we celebrate the arrival of the pilgrims and there have been recent movements and recent activists advocating that at Thanksgiving we should also be celebrating more of the world of indigenous people in the world that indigenous people played in Thanksgiving. Christmas day obviously for Christians is a religious holiday as well as a federal holiday. So here are some resources from USA.gov, having to do with Christmas day. [Indiscernible - low volume] what are chances of having a white Christmas?

I would say in Puerto Rico it is zero. Here is some more information about statistics and historic occurrences of white Christmas. Information from the Senate.gov site, which may talk about Christmas was not always a big holiday. Sometimes the Senate just does not take off anytime over Christmas. This was interesting that in this year, okay, they White House put out a statement, recognizing the Orthodox Christian church, Christmas celebration, occurs in January, on a different date. Then our traditional December 25th and the final one from 1943, information on how Christmas was during the second world war. Just some of the available resources for each of the federal holidays that we celebrate. I wanted to go a little information on other holidays that are celebrated by many groups, by many organizations, by many states to acknowledge that even though they are not federal holidays, they are recognized in these places.

There is a government fact sheet on various Christian holidays in the catalog of publications. There are 10 holiday tips for surviving any version of holidays. There is a fact sheet on Jewish holidays, also available in the catalog of government publications. And there are other holidays that most of us are familiar with, Valentine's Day, which is coming up next week, Earth Day, which has become a phenomenal celebration in many places. Active is and in terms of climate change. Mother's Day, Father's Day, there is also for those of you like I, grandparents, there's also grandparents day now in September. Flag Day and of course Halloween. None of these are federal days. However, sometimes President to make proclamations about the celebration of these days. And religious holidays and ethnic holidays, because of our ethnic and religious diversity within the United States that have special meaning for different groups, Easter, high holy days for, Ramadan, the daybook that set for Buddhists and the Wally

for Hindus so there are numerous holidays that depending upon your ethnic and religious affiliation are also important holidays that are celebrated.

Moving onward, USA.gov, looking for state holidays, legally states are not obligated to celebrate federal holidays, other than federal entities like the post office, for instance, within the state, observes those holidays that states are not legally obligated to celebrate those federal holidays. And states are free to declare their own holidays. Here in Puerto Rico we have seven or eight extra holidays, depending upon the year and how they get designated, that are having to do with historical figures from Puerto Rico, the discovery of Puerto Rico day that I already mentioned. There are a couple of important literary figures who have now been put together in one holiday, so each state is free to celebrate its own holidays. So in this case you can look for state holidays in general. You can look at the name in the state, Louisiana state holidays, Michigan state holidays and find information on how and what are the official holidays in your state.

My search included Illinois, holiday schedule for Texas, holiday in the state of California, holidays in Louisiana, benefits for state holidays, Washington state state holidays. So if you are interested in looking at the state holidays, I think that would be fun to turn into another webinar to look at how state celebrate and what different holidays, different state celebrate, but this is just sort of a beginning introductory piece of information for state holidays. Okay, I had to print it in Spanish of course.

From USA.gov, I did a search for dias festivos federales and hearers a list of them about all of them in Spanish so that if you need information for users who speak Spanish, the information is there. One interesting difference is and some of them, okay, Martin Luther King is obvious, it translates as new year. Presidents' Day, we understand that. This is Memorial day, which is literally translated as day of the commemoration of the dead, of the fallen. Independence Day, dia de la raza, Spanish translation for Columbus Day.

Thanksgiving, literal translation, the act of giving. Here are the holidays at USA.gov, added with this link, the information is there for any of you who may have users who speak Spanish.

Just briefly, a little bit about laws that govern holiday pay. Federal employees are paid for federal holidays. The states do not have to observe holidays and under the fair labor standards act, this link is here. You do not necessarily, depending on your employer, receive pay for your vacation of a holiday whether they are federal or state holidays.

Generally, whether you are paid for the holiday, may be a matter of state law, but it is not required under federal law, unless you are a federal government employee. And there are laws that and regulations which apply to federal contractors as well as federal employees. I was unaware until I looked for laws and holiday pay, that whether or not you are paid for holidays is not dependent upon federal law, but on the law of your state and frequently from the goodness of your employers. So be aware that you do not necessarily have to get paid for holidays.

And with that, I will say holiday greetings for all of those holidays and thank you for listening today and I believe that leaves us some time for questions and discussion.

Thank you, Jane, great webinar. Really terrific, learning some things here. Any questions for Jane? I think there was one about indigenous people that you answered and someone asked about that and I believe

he answered that earlier. Some people put in the chat about different meals were holidays. Check that out, good comments there.

And there are.

Different meals, thank you, Pam, whatever, I don't know if some people do vegetarian Thanksgiving, I don't know how they do that, but I'm sure it's good.

Interesting to know and I say follow-up webinars, said somebody, holidays around the world and that would be interesting. I did not know or realize that Summers and I thought federal holidays were kind of the law and everyone had to follow it and I did not realize the states could pick and choose.

I think I will do a follow-up and I would look at work on that, different state holidays, interesting. If you could get someone maybe from the Department of Labor to talk about government information on labor laws, because I met government documents librarian and am embarrassed to admit that I honestly did not realize until I looked that the federal government does not have requirements that you have to be paid for holidays, unless you are a federal government employee. So I think that might be an interesting webinar to get someone from the department of labor to talk about that.

Yeah, that's good.

Talked was.

Interesting all those other days, Easter, my wife always refers to Easter as a holiday and it is not a holiday. Easter is Easter.

The other one said, interesting, you could explore what is behind all these days, like, various Valentines, other days, father stays, is and that done by greeting card companies?

I remember that at least Mother's Day, I think, was started by, and of course, grandparents day, which is one of the in your once, was almost certainly commercial, beginning.

I think it is interesting that most of the federal holidays developed out of their demand by a Congressman or citizen demand. The original ones were, because federal employees did not necessarily get those days off. And obviously, you would not or would want to speak or spend Christmas Day with your family and like that. And I think Inauguration Day had to do with federal employees were required to attend the inauguration, but were not necessarily required to be paid for that, okay?

I wish there were more in the warmer months in terms of taking a day off, and it seems to be so many clustered around the cold winter time.

In the chat, I see a comment that is from Naomi from Hawaii and they celebrate holidays for many cultures. Noemi, if you want to do one on world holidays in different cultural holidays, send me an email and I think that would be, and if other people would like to collaborate with that, that would be a great webinar on what government resources we can find --

[Indiscernible - overlapping speakers]

When you say holiday, the meat the government or everything shuts down and the government is shut down and give a day off and just like that, like Jane said mandated by the state?

Puerto Rico for many years celebrated all of the federal holidays +11 more. We had 22 official paid holidays. Recently someone finally figured out we are paying people for a lot of extra holidays. They combined some together in the edit that Puerto Rican ancestors holiday to Presidents' Day before most of the years that I have lived here, we actually had 22 official holidays during the year. There were five in the month of July.

That's good.

That was wonderful, however, that is now long gone and combined together in the last few years.

We don't get them all anymore, like into light wear down to getting Independence Day and the others are just dealing with that, but I think it would be interesting to look at other state holidays and also I think looking at holidays for public cultures. It may be if there is a particular ethnic group --

[Indiscernible - overlapping speakers]

Like dates or politicians or people or whoever proclaimed a day like somewhat natural or national pizza date whatever [Laughter] I don't know what that's all about. Don't they we do into the Congressional record sometime?

I --

[Indiscernible - overlapping speakers]

I would like to learn about that.

I know the Census Bureau puts out this thing that I got that I get in my email every once in a while about holidays for the month, like recently, we had national peanut butter day.

Right. Who decides all of that?

[Laughter].

I don't know. Something us to look at. Sort of and unofficial holiday and how they develop, sort of another interesting thing to do.

Maybe --

[Indiscernible - overlapping speakers]

We can go get a whole years worth of webinars.

How do these various months, like Black History month, and you have in the fall some kind of disaster preparedness month. We have had some webinars associated with that.

There are so I think --

[Indiscernible - overlapping speakers]

People celebrate, how does that come about? That would be interesting.

That would be interesting. Yeah, unofficial days of an app like months.

Months, would be interesting, that we celebrate.

Yeah.

Good comments.

State holidays.

That is interesting, until recently Georgia celebrated Confederate Memorial Day and are Elise birthday.

That in there about or that must be interesting to talks about Robert E Lee birthday and of course so many statutes statues are being taken down all over about Civil War people, interesting confluence of things there.

You could have all kinds of spinoffs. This is good, interesting information, Jane.

Yes, I think so. I've got notes on doing unofficial days and state holidays and something on cultural holidays to see what kind of --

[Indiscernible - overlapping speakers]

The months would be good too. Months.

I think so too, I think so too, why do we celebrate. I know there's a national disaster month, like you said.

Black History, I know also disaster, and others that I'm not remembering that at the moment.

Any other questions for Jane? We have a few more minutes.

And all the local colleges, some of them, federal holidays, it will be open on one day and closed on another and then they kind of flip-flopped the days over the different years, right? I remember that. I don't know the logic there.

No, although it may have to do with how the state therein declares the day.

I think it is Columbus and veterans. I think sometimes the colleges may or may not be open on that day and then maybe switch policy and went different ways.

Thank you, Laura, just put the satisfaction survey in the chat. Please fill that out and Lara Flint, if you put those links, I did not double check that they are accurate and they may not be accurate [Laughter].

I updated them, Joe, I checked.

Thank you very much we have a new website so updated website, so, yeah, we have links to all that so probably tomorrow or the next day you will see on the slides, recording for this particular webinar, in our archives.

And always, if you want a copy of the actual PowerPoint, so that you can change it around, use it with your users, sent me an email and I will happily send that to you.

Okay. Let me just give if you little comments here. Before we close out, thank you again for a great webinar, is always, and she will be doing more, plan smart webinars for Jane and she will be doing more in 2022. We have five more, thank you, Lara, tech-support, I appreciate that, my colleague Lara Flint. Five more webinar scheduled for February and the next one is tomorrow. Thursday February 10, Naval postgraduate school historical and contemporary information resources, that is protected from Purdue University, and does a lot of military and intelligence related webinar --

[Indiscernible - overlapping speakers]

They are very interesting I will give a plug here, really good webinars.

So give that a listen. You receive and announcement of all the upcoming webinars if you sign up for our news and events email alert service. Also, think about hosting a webinar. Calendar is and our new FDL P government page is a was on the previous website, but think about presenting a webinar. Could be on any topic related to government information, federal government information or managing a depository or any issues within your public library, all good material for a potential webinar. Contact us at GPO and we will be happy to set that up.

Let's see if we have any last questions.

How [Indiscernible - low volume].

Okay. I don't see any other questions so I think I could close things out, but I would like to thank everyone one less Taine. Jane and Laura and participants, another great webinar for Jane and please come back to the FDL P Academy and come on back tomorrow for a great webinar by Bert Chapman.

Have a great rest of the day, thank you.

Thank you.

[Event Concluded]