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Labor Day Speech Resources: Fact Sheet

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Introduction

Labor Day is a federal holiday celebrating the achievements of American workers. Labor Day also symbolically marks the end of summer and the beginning of the school year.

This guide is designed to assist congressional offices with work-related Labor Day celebrations. It contains a brief history and selected resources for additional historical and legislative information, CRS reports, sample speeches and recognitions from the legislative branch, presidential proclamations, statistical information on the U.S. labor force, and cultural resources on celebrating the holiday.

Origins

The first Labor Day celebration in the United States was held on September 5, 1882, in New York City. It was proposed and sponsored by the Central Labor Union Party as a “workingmen’s holiday.” With the growth of labor organizations throughout the United States, the celebration of Labor Day spread to many industrial centers. Between 1882 and 1894, municipalities and states adopted and enacted ordinances and laws to make Labor Day a holiday.

Legislation

On June 28, 1894, the 53rd Congress passed bill S.730 (Chapter Law 118) designating the first Monday in September of each year a legal holiday to celebrate and affirm the contributions and accomplishments of the American workforce. Many statutes that concern American labor have been enacted. Some resources on these statutes include the following:

U.S. Department of Labor, *Summary of the Major Laws of the Department of Labor*.

U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division, *State Labor Laws*.

U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division, *Worker Rights*.

CRS Reports

The Congressional Research Service has prepared numerous reports that relate to the American labor force. Some of these include the following:

CRS Report R42526, *Federal Labor Relations Statutes: An Overview*, by Jon O. Shimabukuro and David H. Bradley.

CRS Report R43089, *The Federal Minimum Wage: In Brief*, by David H. Bradley.

CRS Report R43301, *Programs Available to Unemployed Workers Through the American Job Center Network*, by Benjamin Collins, David H. Bradley, and Katelin P. Isaacs.

CRS Report R44835, *Paid Family and Medical Leave in the United States*, by Sarah A. Donovan.

CRS In Focus IF10336, *The Fundamentals of Unemployment Compensation*, by Julie M. Whittaker and Katelin P. Isaacs.

CRS Report R45090, *Real Wage Trends, 1979 to 2019*, by Sarah A. Donovan and David H. Bradley.

Sample Congressional Speeches and Recognitions

Members of Congress often make floor statements, issue press releases, or enter Extensions of Remarks into the *Congressional Record* to recognize federal holidays and observances. The following are some recent examples:

Representative Steny H. Hoyer, “Hoyer Statement on Labor Day,” press release, September 7, 2020.

Senator John Barrasso, “Barrasso: American Workers Are Winning as Nation Celebrates Labor Day,” press release, September 2, 2019.

Senator Jacky Rosen, “Rosen Statement on Labor Day,” press release, August 30, 2019.

Representative Angie Craig, “Rep. Angie Craig’s Statement on Labor Day,” press release, September 2, 2019.

Representative Glenn Thompson, “Honoring the American Worker,” remarks in the House, *Congressional Record*, vol. 164 (September 4, 2018), p. H7784.

Senator Maria Cantwell, “Cantwell Statement on Labor Day, 2018,” press release, September 3, 2018.

Senator Marco Rubio, “Republicans Can Honor Labor Day by Putting American Workers First,” press release, September 3, 2018.

Presidential Proclamations and Remarks

One of the many uses of a presidential proclamation is to ceremoniously honor a group or call attention to certain issues or events. Some recent Labor Day proclamations and remarks, from the *Compilation of Presidential Documents*, include the following:

Presidential Proclamations—Donald J. Trump (2017- 2020)

Presidential Proclamations—Barack H. Obama (2009-2016)

Presidential Messages and Remarks—George W. Bush (2001-2008)

Presidential Messages and Remarks—William J. Clinton (1993-2000)

Presidential proclamations and remarks from 1993 to the present are available through the Government Publishing Office website govinfo.gov. Earlier remarks (including selected audio and video clips) are available through The American Presidency Project, established by the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Statistics

Several federal agencies maintain statistics on the American workforce. Some useful sources of data and information include the following:

U.S. Census Bureau, *Labor Day: September 7, 2020*.

U.S. Census Bureau, *Labor Force Statistics*.

U.S. Department of Labor, *Bureau of Labor Statistics*.

U.S. Department of Labor, *Minimum Wage Laws in the United States*.

Historical Resources

Many federal agencies provide additional resources on the history of Labor Day (and other labor-related remembrances) and of the American workforce. Some of these include the following:

Library of Congress, “*Business and Labor History: Primary Sources at the Library of Congress.*” Research guide to business and labor-related personal papers and organizational records in the Manuscript Division, as well as to other collections in the Library of Congress that may be of interest to labor historians.

Library of Congress, “*Labor Day Labor Round-Up & Parade.*” *Inside Adams* blog post contains a collection of links to Labor Day or labor-related topics found in the digital collections and online resources from the Library of Congress.

Library of Congress, “*In Celebration of American Labor.*” *Folklife Today* blog post containing links to historical labor song recordings, sheet music, and oral histories contained in the Library of Congress’s collections.

Library of Congress, selected historical Labor Day images from the Prints & Photographs Online Catalog.

National Archives, “*Labor Day.*” Information about labor-related government records held by the National Archives, and links to resources presidential libraries and other institutions. Includes a media gallery of images.

U.S. Department of Labor, *History of Labor Day*.

The Smithsonian Institution, Museum on Main Street, *The Way We Worked*.

The Smithsonian Institution, “*Labor Day.*” Images related to Labor Day from the Smithsonian collections.

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