

UNITED STATES

OF AMERICA



Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 90th CONGRESS
SECOND SESSION

VOLUME 114—PART 10

MAY 8, 1968, TO MAY 15, 1968

(PAGES 12219 TO 13564)

lic holidays. In the deliberations of our committee we concluded that a complete Monday holiday program would not be in the national interest since there are some holidays such as the Fourth of July, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, and Thanksgiving, the specific dates of which are deeply embedded in our traditions—and in some cases, have a religious significance.

In addition to a wide variety of proposals for the establishment of Monday holidays, the 90th Congress has also seen the introduction of almost 500 bills calling for the new observance of additional holidays and other commemorative events. Obviously, if any new holidays are to be created, we in the Congress are faced with the difficult task of being selective.

H.R. 15951, has bipartisan support and was formulated after extensive hearings and the most careful evaluation. It is a moderate proposal which would serve a twofold purpose. On the one hand, it would provide for the annual observance on Mondays of George Washington's Birthday, Memorial Day, and Veterans Day. On the other hand, it would establish an additional public holiday in honor of Christopher Columbus—a holiday which would also be observed on Monday.

First, if I may, I would like to discuss the benefits which our citizens will derive from the Monday holiday features of this bill. Second, I would like to review for you the considerations in favor of the observance of Columbus Day as an additional public holiday.

One of the principal advantages of the observance of holidays on Monday is the increased enrichment which such observances will bring to the family life of our Nation. In our complex, highly industrialized society we have witnessed a growing tendency for families to become separated. Sons and daughters often venture great distances from the homes of their parents in pursuit of educational and occupational advantages. Grandparents in many families rarely have the opportunity to enjoy the company of their grandchildren. At the same time, within the immediate family unit fathers are often called upon to commute considerable distances to their jobs, diminishing the number of precious hours available for family togetherness.

The proposed Monday holiday program will help to ameliorate these conditions. It will provide the many families that are geographically separated with greater opportunities to come together. It will also provide increased opportunities for the enjoyment of recreational facilities and the development of cultural activities in which the whole family can participate.

I believe that these benefits are obvious and are known to each of us. Indeed, no one can deny that under our present holiday program we get a special enjoyment out of those holidays which now fall, by chance of the calendar, either immediately before or immediately after a weekend. The present bill would merely serve to remove the element of chance, and provide for several 3-day weekends on a regular and planned basis.

While enriching our Nation's family

life, the Monday holiday program will also enrich our economic life. In this regard, our committee heard extensive testimony both from representatives of business and from labor. The evidence is conclusive that the Monday Holiday program will stimulate greater industrial production and contribute to an increase in our gross national product. It will reduce employee absenteeism and contribute to increased employee morale. Both the employer and the employee will benefit and neither at the expense of the other.

Turning now to the second feature of the bill, the establishment of Columbus Day as a public holiday, which would also fall on Monday. Let me first point out that of all the proposals before the Congress for the establishment of additional holidays, there is none which enjoys the same widespread popularity that is enjoyed by the Columbus Day proposal. Unlike any of the other proposed new holidays, a Columbus Day observance has already been established as a matter of law in some 34 of our States. As a result, it is currently being celebrated by more than 75 percent of our Nation's population.

Now there is an obvious explanation for this great popularity of Columbus Day. Our late President Kennedy often described us as a "nation of immigrants." It has been our immigrant spirit—our continuous striving to broaden our horizons in search of new experiences and new frontiers—which has given our history its distinctive flavor. This same spirit has also caused us to represent to the world prospects of new hope and new freedom. Columbus' voyage to America has come to be an important symbol of this immigrant spirit. Since this symbol has already been adopted by most of our State legislatures in State laws calling for the celebration of Columbus Day, we in the Congress ought properly to add our voices in affirmation of the significance of this occasion.

When the proposed bill is considered in its entirety, there can be no doubt that the whole program has the support of an overwhelming majority of our citizens. In this regard, I would like to point out that at the hearings we held on Monday holidays strong support for such a program was expressed by a wide variety of associations including such diverse groups as: the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, the American Federation of Government Employees, the National Retail Federation, the National Association of Travel Organizations, the International Amalgamated Transit Union, and the National Association of Letter Carriers. In addition, we received testimony favoring Monday holiday legislation from the representatives of the Department of Labor, the Bureau of the Budget, the Department of Commerce, and the U.S. Civil Service Commission.

Under all of these circumstances, I am thoroughly convinced that the bill before us embodies a holiday program which is highly responsive to a strong public need. It is a program that preserves and reaffirms our traditions—while affording greater opportunities for

a fuller participation in holiday observances by all of our citizens, I, therefore, urge all of my colleagues in this body to give this measure their complete support.

Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. EILBERG] may extend his remarks at this point.

The CHAIRMAN. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Colorado?

There was no objection.

Mr. EILBERG. Mr. Chairman, I am convinced that H.R. 15951, making provisions for most holidays to fall on Mondays, should be enacted.

Much support for this legislation has already been shown. Polls of businessmen and the public both indicate that most Americans would like Congress to provide that all nonreligious holidays be celebrated on Mondays. This would mean 3-day weekends.

The support for this provision has been shown by two specific polls. One was conducted by the National Chamber of Commerce among its membership, and the other by This Week magazine. The chamber survey recorded 85 percent of its 10,000 respondents were in favor of making most holidays fall on Monday, while more than 180,000 readers-at-large responded in favor and only about 10,000 persons expressed opposition to uniform Monday holidays.

Why do people apparently prefer Monday holidays? They may feel that they can get more accomplished—take the family fishing or visit relatives or finish those nagging do-it-yourself chores. A midweek holiday simply does not, and never will, offer the variety of activities and creative opportunities that a longer holiday period makes available.

Monday holidays, in addition to the benefit to the worker, also offer attractions to the executives charged with getting the work completed. People seem to work better when the week is not broken up, and there are fewer sudden illnesses or time-off requests when the holidays are not interrupting normal midweek schedules.

Most of our nonreligious holidays are neither historically accurate nor traditional, so there is no reason not to change them. Why celebrate George Washington's birthday on February 22 if, under the calendar at the time, he was really born on the 11th? Why do we celebrate Independence Day on the 4th of July? It was July 2 when the Continental Congress actually adopted the resolution of independence, and it was July 19 when Congress ordered the document engrossed.

Since few of our holidays are historically accurate, since many of them have had to be adjusted because of changes in calendar usage, let us be realistic about our approach to legal public holidays. Let us celebrate New Year's Day, as always, January 1. Let us, however, celebrate Washington's birthday the third Monday in February, and Memorial Day the last Monday in May. We should continue the celebration of Independence Day on July 4, regardless of its accuracy because the date bears such traditional significance.