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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

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, *Resources for Workers*.

CRS Reports

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

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 R43768, *The OSH Act: A Legal Overview*, by Rodney M. Perry.

CRS Report R44835, *Paid Family 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.

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 Terri Sewell, “Observance of Labor Day 2016,” press release, September 2, 2016.

Representative Leonard Lance, “Lance Statement on Labor Day,” press release, September 2, 2016.

Senator Ben Cardin, “Labor Day 2015,” press release, September 8, 2015.

Senator Sherrod Brown, “Celebrating Labor Day and American Workers,” remarks in the Senate, *Congressional Record*, vol. 161 (September 8, 2015), p. S6458.

Representative Ruben Gallego, “America’s 122nd Labor Day,” remarks in the House, *Congressional Record*, vol. 161 (September 8, 2015), p. H5790.

Representative Morgan Griffith, “Griffith Labor Day Statement,” press release, September 2, 2013.

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

U.S. President (Obama), “Building Upon the Legacy of Labor Day,” *The President’s Weekly Address* (September 3, 2016). [Click here for White House video.]

Proclamation 9486–Labor Day, 2016.

Proclamation 9316–Labor Day, 2015.

Proclamation 9161–Labor Day, 2014.

Presidential proclamations and remarks from 1993 to the present are available through the Federal Digital System (FDsys) on the Government Publishing Office website. 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

U.S. Census Bureau, *Facts for Features: Labor Day 2017, Sept. 4*.

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

Library of Congress, “*Labor History Sources in the Manuscript Division.*” Research guide to 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.*” Collected by teachers for teachers, a guide to the Library’s best exhibits, activities, primary sources, and lesson plans on the history of workers including women, unions, and child labor through historic films and photographs.

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

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

U.S. Department of Labor, *Workers’ Memorial Day (April 28, 2017)*.

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

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