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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, *Your Rights as a Worker*.

CRS Reports

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

CRS Report R42519, *Youth and the Labor Force: Background and Trends*, by (name redacted)

CRS Report R42526, *Federal Labor Relations Statutes: An Overview*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted)

CRS Report R43089, *The Federal Minimum Wage: In Brief*, by (name redacted)

CRS Report R43768, *The OSH Act: A Legal Overview*, by (name redacted)

CRS Report R44365, *What Does the Gig Economy Mean for Workers?*, by (name redacted), (name redacted), and (name redacted)

CRS In Focus IF10329, *The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted)

CRS Insight IN10506, *Declining Dynamism in the U.S. Labor Market*, by (name redacted)

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:

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

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

Sen. Rob Portman, “Labor Day Message,” press release, September 3, 2012.

Rep. Mike Kelly, “Labor Day Statement,” press release, September 5, 2011.

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), “This Labor Day, Let’s Talk About the Budget,” *The President’s Weekly Address* (September 5, 2015). [[Click here for White House video.](#)]

Proclamation 9316–Labor Day, 2015.

Proclamation 9161–Labor Day, 2014.

Proclamation 9012–Labor Day, 2013.

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 2016, Sept. 5*.

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

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Union Members in 2015*.

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 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, 2016).*

The National Archives, *The Way We Worked.*

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