



Chris Danou's Capitol Report
Remember Workers This Labor Day

The first Monday in September brings Labor Day and unofficially signifies the end of the summer season. While the holiday is considered to be the official end of summer, Labor Day actually celebrates the economic and social achievements of the American workforce. Every year this national tribute reminds us of the contributions workers have made to the prosperity, strength and well-being of our state and country.

Like many of the traditions we celebrate in the United States, Labor Day has very humble roots that have become an integral American celebration. The first known Labor Day celebration was on Tuesday, September 5, 1882, in New York City, in accordance with plans made by the Central Labor Union (CLU). The Central Labor Union was comprised of workers from New York City, Brooklyn and New Jersey. The CLU held its second Labor Day holiday one year later, on September 5, 1883.

In 1884, the first Monday in September was selected as the holiday and the CLU urged similar organizations in other cities to follow the example of New York to celebrate a "workingmen's holiday" on that date. The idea spread with the growth of labor organizations and in 1885 Labor Day was celebrated in other industrial centers. After a few years, people across the nation gave increasing emphasis to the Labor Day holiday through municipal ordinances and state legislation. While the first state bill was introduced into the New York legislature, the first to state to actually pass a bill into law was Oregon on February 21, 1887. During that year Colorado, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York also made Labor Day an official state holiday.

The end of the decade brought Labor Day recognition from Connecticut, Nebraska, and Pennsylvania and by 1894, twenty-three other states had adopted the holiday in honor of workers. On June 28, 1894 Congress passed legislation that recognized the first Monday in September as the Labor Day holiday in all of the states, District of Columbia and the territories. The holiday became a time of celebratory activities and events that included parades, cookouts and of course a day off from work. Later on, speeches by prominent men and women became part of the festivities as a way to highlight the civic and economic importance that created the holiday.

The vital force of labor has significantly contributed to creating a higher standard of living and the greater levels of production. Through this, our community, state and country have come closer to the full realization of our founding ideals of economic prosperity and political democracy. Not only have workers labored for our prosperity and democracy, but they also fought for many of the things we sometimes take for granted in the workplace today. Labor directly influenced the 8 hour workday, 40 hour work week, fought for vacation time, sick leave, worker's compensation and necessary safety standards and child labor laws. It's through actions such as these that appreciation and respect for work is shown to laborers. After all, they more than just workers, and are people who deserve to be treated decently in the workplace.

Imagine what our nation would look like without the blood, sweat and tears so many people gave so every person would have a chance to realize the American dream. Yes, we truly owe a lot to the American worker as their hands and minds have helped build our nation into what it is today. I hope you can take a moment to remember the many contributions of workers this Labor Day.

