

“AMERICANISM IN ACTION”
PATRIOTIC HOLIDAYS
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The American Legion has been the acknowledged leader in observing patriotic holidays since its inception in 1919. Five such holidays are listed in the Americanism Manual: Arbor Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day, and Veterans Day.

ARBOR DAY - Arbor Day (arbor - Latin word meaning tree) is the holiday in which individuals and groups are encouraged to plant trees. National Arbor Day was proclaimed as the last Friday in April by President Nixon in 1970. Today, 24 states and Washington, DC recognize that date. Most state holidays

are observed in the spring but dates vary to coincide with climate and the best tree planting weather. The observance began in 1872 when Nebraska settlers and homesteaders were urged to plant trees on their largely treeless plains. More than a million trees were planted on April 10, 1872. By 1907 every state in the union observed Arbor Day, principally through school programs. Through these celebrations school children were urged to plant trees as a patriotic event as well as a sound investment and a contribution to the community. The American Legion should take the lead each year in observance of this day because it's an appropriate time for the planting of trees as living memorials to the war dead of the community.



MEMORIAL DAY - Memorial Day is a United States federal holiday which occurs every year on the last Monday in May. The earliest observances of this holiday began in the shadows of the Civil War, it represents one day of national awareness and reverence honoring those Americans who died while defending our nation and its values. The “National Moment of Remembrance” resolution asks all Americans to pause at 3 p.m. on that day and informally observe, in their own way, a moment of remembrance and respect. Many American Legion posts get out into local cemeteries earlier in the month and place flags on the graves of veterans. Most posts then conduct Memorial Day programs in those same cemeteries. On Memorial Day, the U.S. flag should fly at half-staff for the first half of the day, and then be raised to full height from noon to sundown. This unique custom honors the war dead throughout the morning and living veterans for the rest of the day.





FLAG DAY - Flag Day is celebrated annually on June 14. It commemorates the adoption of the flag of the United States, which happened on that date in 1777 by resolution of the Second Continental Congress. Every American Legion post should observe the day with appropriate ceremonies. The program should be scheduled to include a “Pause for the Pledge of Allegiance” at 7:00 pm, EDT, to coincide with activities that are held annually at Fort McHenry in Baltimore, MD.

INDEPENDENCE DAY – Each year on July 4, communities throughout the U.S. commemorate adoption of the Declaration of Independence by the Continental Congress in 1776. For all practical purposes, this is the nation’s birthday – the birth of our great republic - and is recognized as a legal holiday in all states and territories. American Legion posts are encouraged to sponsor and conduct appropriate activities. Most communities light up the night skies with fireworks. Some communities celebrate with parades, often lead by American Legion color guards.



VETERANS DAY – Veterans Day is national holiday that is observed each year on November 11. It was originally known as “Armistice Day,” a celebration of the end of World War I. On June 1, 1954, the



name was changed to Veterans Day to honor all U.S. veterans and thank all who served in the United States Armed Forces. Veterans Day will always have a very deep personal significance to many members of The American Legion Family because it honors America’s veterans for their patriotism, love of country, and willingness to serve and sacrifice for the common good. Virtually all American Legion posts observe the day with appropriate observances and programs throughout their communities, including schools and cemeteries.