



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on February 19, 2018

Monday Is “Washington’s Birthday Observed”

Although popularly referred to as “Presidents’ Day,” the legal name of the third Monday in February is Washington’s Birthday Observed. This is as it should be. Putting Washington in the same category as (say) Nixon and Clinton makes no sense.



While it is common to refer to the third Monday in February as “Presidents’ Day,” no such holiday exists in federal law. The federal holiday is still “George Washington’s Birthday Observed.” Yet even the post office puts up signs on its doors that they will be closed on “Presidents’ Day.” It is another demonstration of the lawless attitude that exists, where laws or the Constitution do not have to be changed to accomplish liberal objectives.

One reason for the colloquial use of the term “Presidents’ Day,” instead of “Washington’s Birthday,” was due to efforts to include a celebration of Abraham Lincoln’s birthday, which is on February 12 (while Washington’s falls on the 22nd). Lincoln’s birthday has never been a federal holiday.

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An effort to legally change the name to Presidents’ Day failed when that name change was deleted from the Uniform Monday Holiday Act, before its final passage in 1968.

But advertisers began to use the term Presidents’ Day anyway, with increasing frequency. By the 1980s, Presidents’ Day was used so much in sale circulars and the like that was no doubt assumed that it was now the legal name of the federal holiday.

This move to downgrade the Father of our Country is disgraceful.

Putting Washington in with Nixon and Clinton makes no sense. The reason that Washington was honored with a separate day was not principally because he was our first president, but rather because of his role in securing our nation’s independence as the commander in chief in the war against the British. Surely, Washington’s role as president of the Constitutional Convention and as first president of the United States add to his well-earned title as “Father of his Country,” but without Washington’s service in our war for independence, our country would never have been born.

Thus, he is the father of his country.

Near the end of the Revolutionary War, there was a movement by some of his officers to make Washington our first king, or at the very least, a military dictator. All Washington had to do was give his consent, and our experiment in self-government would have gone the way of most revolutions, giving us



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an authoritarian dictatorship.

Fortunately, Washington was of a higher moral character than Santa Anna, Napoleon, and Caesar. When John Adams nominated Washington to be the Continental Army's commander-in-chief, one of his considerations — in addition to the question of whether he could win and the desire to bring Virginia and the South even more strongly into the fight against Britain — was: Does this man have the moral character to give up that power if he is successful?

Adams' intuition was correct.

Our children are growing up knowing very little about the man who was truly the "indispensable man," and the greatest person in our nation's history. Every January, we have parades to honor Martin Luther King, and the media duly notes the day with front-page stories and features on evening newscasts. Almost no one has parades for the man without whom America would not even exist — George Washington.

Sadly, about all that is taught about Washington today is that he had a mouth full of false teeth (typical of the day), that he had slaves (which he freed), or that he was a deist in religion (which is not true).

The last charge contradicts historical evidence. When I visited Washington's tomb at Mount Vernon, I was struck by the Bible verse on the wall. Taken from the Gospel of John, it is a quotation from Jesus, to Martha, the sister of Jesus' dead friend, Lazarus. "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Strange, I thought. Strange that a deist would have at his burial plot a statement of belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. Since deists believe in a Creator of the universe, who otherwise does not intervene in human affairs, belief in just about *any* Christian doctrine, not to mention the belief in the literal physical resurrection of its Founder, would be a flat contradiction.

Why not a day to exclusively honor George Washington — by name? We have Groundhog Day, National Ice Cream Day, and all the rest. But no day exists to honor the man, without whom there would be no liberty bell to ring, this year or any other year.

Happy George Washington's Birthday!

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