



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on June 14, 2021

## Happy “Day Off!” N.J. School District Drops Holiday Names From Its Calendar

The Randolph, New Jersey, school board voted unanimously last Thursday to keep specific holidays off the school calendar, including Thanksgiving, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Christmas, [NJ.com](#) reported. Holidays will now be designated as “Day Off” on the calendar.

“If we don’t have anything on the calendar, we don’t have to have anyone [with] hurt feelings or anything like that,” board member Dorene Roche [said](#).

Another board member, Ronald Conti, reportedly said before the vote that “I don’t think really it is the board’s responsibility to be naming these holidays. Either take them off or just adopt whatever the federal and state governments are doing.”

The board members made the move in an effort to not offend anyone who feels slighted by days that reference a person, holiday, or ethnic group.

The controversy stems from a [decision](#) by the board last month to rename Columbus Day “Indigenous People’s Day” following a recommendation from its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Ad Hoc Committee. The topic, however, was not on the meeting’s agenda, and community members criticized the board’s process, which, they said, didn’t provide adequate notice for getting public input.

The move to drop Columbus Day has already been [embraced](#) by some states and at least two New Jersey communities — Newark and Princeton.

Christopher Columbus, the 15th-century Italian explorer credited with discovering the Americas, is one of many historical figures whose legacy has been under attack in recent years because of conduct or views that are found objectionable under present-day standards of political correctness.

Many generations were taught that Columbus was a brave explorer who “sailed the ocean blue” and “discovered” the New World, and his legacy is dear to many Italian Americans. But his standing as a figure of reverence has increasingly come into question as historical focus shifts from European colonizers to their native “victims.”

Indigenous People’s Day, which began as a counter-celebration to Columbus Day, celebrates Native Americans and commemorates their histories. Critics believe that while Indigenous People’s Day showcases the violent history of Western colonization, it omits the long [record](#) of slavery, torture, cannibalism, and human sacrifice widely practiced in pre-Columbian America.

Randolph school board member Susan DeVito [said](#) that as “more information” is disclosed about



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Columbus, the more questions are raised about whether a holiday should be named for him: “We need to use that knowledge to be on the right side of history,” DeVito told board members. “Just because his name has always been on the calendar doesn’t mean it always should be.”

“Although at one time a widely celebrated figure of American history, Christopher Columbus’s legacy has become controversial as his harsh treatment of indigenous people has become more widely known,” [said](#) New Jersey Democrat legislator Brian Stack. “In his voyages to the New World, Columbus and his men inflicted violence on the indigenous people of the Caribbean while inadvertently bringing many new diseases that decimated native populations,” Stack added.

In Randolph, many residents [outraged](#) by the renaming of the holiday turned out for Thursday’s meeting.

“I would like to think that the removal of Columbus Day was simply based on a lack of understanding,” Franco Piarulli, a parent, [told](#) the board. “Either that or Italian Americans are simply not part of your definition of inclusion.”

Thomas Tatem, a Randolph resident and father of four, launched a [petition](#) against members of the Randolph Board of Education on Friday evening, which met its initial goal of 1,000 signatures on Saturday evening. The petition says the board members “have disgraced our community and clearly do not have the best interests of our children in anything they do.”

“It’s our nation. We’re celebrating the heritage and also the freedoms that those brave men and women fought for to give us those freedoms that we have to be on here debating this topic and everything so I can’t imagine anyone who would have any sort of problem with that,” Tatem [said](#) to *Fox & Friends*, in reference to holidays such as Memorial Day and Veterans Day. He noted that on Memorial Day, “we historically have our veterans come into classrooms to share their stories with our children, so how do you celebrate that if you can’t even call it that?” Just recently, on the eve of Memorial Day, Vice President Kamala Harris [advised](#) people to “enjoy the long weekend” without any mention of the holiday reserved for honoring U.S. military members who have died in combat.

Frank Tomasiello was among the first Randolph residents to sign Tatem’s petition, saying, “We will not allow our beautiful town to be taken over by woke cancel culture. History exists so we can learn from it — the good, the bad and the ugly — and you have now become part of the ugly.”



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