

Community Comment Feb. 16th, 2015

By Jon Sapper
Presidents' Day

Today is Presidents' Day where we celebrate, honor and remember those men who have served in this nation's highest office. I think it's good to recognize these individuals. The job certainly is not easy and there are always folks who either think you are doing a great job or think you are doing a miserable job. The American public apparently thinks our current president is doing a miserable job. At least that was the finding from a national survey when asked who has been the worst president since World War II. Someone asked me a few weeks ago what I thought was the worst part of Obama's Presidency. He was an Obama supporter and not wanting to get into politics with him, I said, "His golf swing." Now it's not as bad as Charles Barkley's swing or as bad as Dick Cheney's aim with a shotgun, but the threat of being hit by a golf ball from President Obama if you're standing directly in front of him, is pretty minimal.

President's Day started out in the year 1800, one year after the death of our first president, George Washington. Back then it was not a Federal holiday, but rather an annual day of remembrance. It didn't become an official holiday until 1879 and even then, it was only observed in the District of Columbia. Six years later it expanded nationwide.

The shift from Washington's Birthday to President's Day happened in the late 60's with Congress passing the Uniform Monday Holiday Act. Now, there's a name. They rationalized that 3-day weekends would reduce employee absenteeism compared to mid-week holidays..... and a 3-day weekend would bolster retail sales. So even though the act was passed in '68, it didn't take effect until 1971 after Richard Nixon signed an executive order. I can't recall if this executive order was just before or just after the executive order authorizing Watergate.

There were some who thought this name switch was an attempt to combine the birthdays of Washington and Lincoln as a way to celebrate both while only missing one day of work. Others thought it was a way to honor all presidents without having to take 43 days off. What some people don't know is this name change from Washington's Birthday to President's Day has never been authorized

by Congress..... and the Federal Government still refers to today as Washington's Birthday, even though it isn't.

I think the name change idea to get rid of the Washington's Birthday reference was more of a conspiracy. I think it was an attempt by the environmental community to stop having kids talk about cutting down cherry trees.

This has been Jon Sapper for Community Comment.