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### Digging through the Layers of Veterans Day

Every day, over 1 million Americans fight for the United States military, and over 760,000 are on reserve or a part of the National Guard, as of June 2025. And every year, on the 11th of November, we celebrate those who are fighting for our nation, those who fought for our nation, and we celebrate the remembrance of those who have fallen while fighting for our nation. From its World War I origins to the gratitude the U.S. as a whole has for our entire military today, the fascinating history and significance of Veterans Day have varied over the years.

On November 11, 1918, an armistice was proclaimed between the Allied Nations and Germany, drastically halting World War I, which ended the following year when the Treaty of Versailles was signed. Although the Treaty of Versailles was the official end of the war, the Armistice of 1918 held significant meaning in the United States, as well as to the other nations that participated in the Great War, specifically because it was announced on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. In 1919, on the first anniversary of the World War I armistice, President Woodrow Wilson commemorated the end of World War I and those who fought in it, proclaiming the day as Armistice Day; but it wasn't until May 13, 1938, that Congress passed the act to make it a legal U.S. holiday.

In 1939, however, everything changed when Germany invaded Poland, and Nazi Germany's aggressive rise to power sent a riveting shockwave to the world, thus commencing World War II. World War II's effects were far more detrimental than first, nearly quadrupling the number of soldiers our nation lost in World War I, and nearly 16 million served in World War II. On top of that, 5.7 million fought in the Korean War from 1950-1953, which was roughly a

million more compared to those who served in World War I. As a result, in 1954, veteran lobbyist organizations pushed for Armistice Day to be renamed Veterans Day to honor the millions who fought not only in World War I, but other wars as well. The lobbyists succeeded, and President Dwight. D. Eisenhower amended the 1938 act, changing Armistice Day into Veterans Day. This didn't only change the name of the holiday, but the significance—now Veterans Day recognizes all American veterans who have put their lives on the line for their country and its inhabitants.

Later in 1968, amidst controversy, the Uniform Monday Holiday Act changed when we would celebrate Veterans Day. To give more three-day weekends to federal employees, and to possibly give state/local governments and some businesses the same opportunity, Congress passed the Uniform Monday Holiday Act, changing four federal holidays to take place on a Monday: George Washington's birthday, Memorial Day, Columbus Day, and, most notably, Veterans Day. Veterans Day would now take place on the fourth Monday of October, rather than the 11th of November, completely depriving its symbolic origin. When the act was set in motion in 1971, people began to feel puzzled about why Veterans Day was on a random Monday in October and not on the iconic November 11th. Additionally, many states disagreed about the change and continued to celebrate it on November 11th. Thankfully, Gerald Ford changed the federal date back to November 11th during the second year of his term in 1975, and it's remained that way ever since.

The meaning of Veterans Day has changed over the years, but today, Veterans Day honors all veterans of any branch—whether it's our fighters in the sky in the Air Force, or the defenders of our coasts; it honors those who have fallen while serving, and it honors those brave enough to risk their lives for we the people, so the very least we should do is thank them.

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