

Governor's Column 9/1/01

Labor Day Holiday Celebrates American Spirit; Let's Do It Safely

On Tuesday, September 5, 1882, the very first Labor Day holiday was observed in New York City. On June 28, 1894, Congress made it official by adopting legislation marking the first Monday in September as a legal holiday across the country.

Samuel Gompers, founder and president of the American Federation of Labor, once said that Labor Day was different from all other holidays in that it was “devoted to no man, living or dead, to no sect, race, or nation.”

Over the past 107 years, the American laborer and the character of Labor Day have changed. The face of the working man and woman has changed somewhat during that time, as we have seen industry shift from heavy, labor-intensive jobs to more skilled and technical jobs. Addressing this shift is one of the great challenges facing us today, and Mississippi is taking the challenge on and winning by attracting businesses that rely on a truly skilled workforce.

This weekend, we celebrate once again the spirit and hard work that has built our nation. It is a time to remember those who, both now and in the past, have done so much to make America great through their ingenuity, strength and dedication to the free market. We owe a great deal to the men and women who have put their minds and backs to work and stood as a symbol of the greatness of this country.

I am personally thankful for those people who do so much to keep our state and our country moving ahead through their labor, creativity and desire.

Of course, this weekend is also a time to officially mark the beginning of a new time of the year – a time when the children start a new school year, when we start making the weekend pilgrimages to see our favorite college football teams play, when we hope for the cooler weather of fall only to suffer once again through the days of Indian summer.

Across Mississippi and the United States this Labor Day weekend, thousands of barbecues will be fired up in backyards. Small towns and big cities alike will hold celebrations, parades and festivals commemorating the holiday. Ski boats will be on the lakes and rivers for at least one more day of fun. Families will be on the highways going to visit relatives and friends.

We can all play a part in making this a Labor Day holiday to remember, and we can do it by playing it safe. If you're going to be on the road, be sure to wear a seatbelt and make sure your children are secured properly in a child seat.

Over this past Memorial Day weekend, the Mississippi Highway Patrol beefed up its efforts to ensure our safety on the roads through the successful "Click It or Ticket" campaign. Let's have a repeat of that weekend again, one in which there were no fatalities on roads covered by the Mississippi Highway Patrol.

And, if you plan to drive this weekend, please do not drink. If you plan to drink, do so in moderation and have a designated driver assigned to take care of you and others in your group. It's not worth risking your life and the lives of other innocent people.

Whether you are celebrating the American worker or just the long weekend, remember to play it safe. We need each of you to continue proving that Mississippi can compete with anyone, anytime, anywhere.