

## **Honoring George Washington's Legacy: Does America Need a Reminder**

**Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, U.S. Postal Service  
and Labor Policy  
February 29, 2012**

Mr. Chairman, thank you for convening this hearing to discuss the importance of honoring George Washington on February 22. Last Wednesday marked the 280<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth, yet most Americans celebrated a generic "President's Day" holiday two days earlier instead. Hardly any mention is made of the real purpose of the Federal Holiday, which is to honor Washington's birth.

Does anyone here today celebrate your birthday on the third Monday of a month? Of course not. So why do we diminish the memory of the greatest American by turning his birthday into nothing more than a three-day weekend? The legislation you are considering today will remedy this glaring problem.

I have long admired President Washington and have found inspiration in public service from studying his life. Washington

was a natural leader; whether in the saddle or at the seat of government, he was able to draw out the best in those who served with him.

Two-time Pulitzer Prize winning historian David McCullough, who supports this legislation, recently observed, “We’re raising young people who are, by and large, historically illiterate.” I believe Congress has unwittingly contributed to this lack of historical understanding by relegating Washington’s Birthday to the third Monday of February to take advantage of a three-day weekend. We need to change the focus from celebrating sales at the mall to celebrating the significance of President Washington’s birth to the birth of our nation.

In the summer of 1775, George Washington was chosen by Congress to lead the Continental Army because of his character, his dedication to the cause of liberty and freedom, his sense of duty to his country and his reverence to the Almighty. Facing the many hardships of the Revolution and formation of our government, the Founding Fathers knew that in Washington

they had a leader who would never relent and therefore would inspire those he led to follow his example.

In his letter supporting this legislation, author and historian Richard Brookhiser said, “George Washington held unprecedented power and responsibility; military and political, in a brand-new nation, without breaking or bending its laws. He did every job he was asked, and when he was done, he went home.”

His jobs were too numerous to count: soldier, legislator, commander-in-chief, president of the Constitutional Convention and finally chief executive. Each was done with the knowledge that his service was expected of him by his country and his creator.

Washington’s character served him well in the political arena as well. Stuart Leibiger, chair of the History Department at LaSalle University said, “As Chief Executive, Washington helped hold the United States together until it became strong enough to hold itself together.” This was not an easy task.

Managing the different personalities in his cabinet took exceptional skill and respect. Yet, while Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton agreed on very little, they both agreed in the greatness of Washington.

In 1789, there was only the blueprint of the Constitution to go by; Congress and the federal government had to create its own traditions. Author Myron Magnet, in his letter supporting this legislation said, “There was so much [Washington] had to make up as he went along, out of his own judgment, experience, and instinct, and he had to bring his audience along with him by force of character.” America has had many leaders who followed this example.

Who will emerge in the decades ahead to lead us to more crowning achievements? What corner of our country will produce a leader with the strength of character, dedication to country and the desire to serve that guided George Washington?

President Washington exemplifies the best that America and Americans have to offer the world: principled leadership,

personal bravery, a sense of duty and public service, patriotism, recognition of our unique role in world history and a reverence for his Creator. His enduring service deserves to be remembered on his actual birthday.

In his letter supporting this legislation, David McCullough said, “Celebrating George Washington’s birthday on February 22 is a simple, solid, self-evident statement of respect for one of the greatest of all Americans, for his whole founding generation, and for so much that we owe them.”

We owe it to future generations to honor George Washington on February 22 and do all we can to ensure that his legacy is never forgotten and accessible to all.

# **The Hon. Frank R. Wolf**

## **10<sup>th</sup> District of Virginia**

### **Biography**

Congressman Wolf, the most senior of the 11 members of the House of Representatives from Virginia, is serving in his 16th term in Congress. He represents the 10th District of Virginia, which stretches from McLean to Winchester.

Congressman Wolf sits on the powerful House Appropriations Committee, where he is the Chairman on the Commerce-Justice-Science subcommittee. He also serves on the Transportation and Housing and Urban Development and State and Foreign Operations subcommittees. In addition, he is the co-chairman of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, a bipartisan organization made up of more than 200 Members of Congress who work together to raise awareness about international human rights issues.

His committee assignment provides him with an ideal vantage point from which to address the varying needs of the 10th District. The 10th District is home to some of the world's leading Internet and high-tech companies, thousands of federal employees and other professionals. Agriculture and manufacturing also are an important part of the 10th District's economy.

Congressman Wolf is one of the House's leading crusaders for human rights. He believes members of Congress have an obligation to speak out for those who are persecuted around the world. He has traveled to Ethiopia, Sudan, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and other countries in Africa to see firsthand the tremendous suffering of the people at the hands of corrupt governments, war, AIDS and famine. He led the first congressional delegation to Darfur in western Sudan to bring attention to the crisis there, later officially declared by the U.S. government as genocide. He also has worked to call attention to the human rights abuses and religious persecution in the People's Republic of China, Tibet, Romania, Nagorno-Karabakh, Chechnya, Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor, and the Middle East.

Congressman Wolf was born in 1939 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He received his B.A. degree from Penn State University in 1961 and his law degree from Georgetown University in 1965. He lives in Vienna with his wife, Carolyn. They have five adult children and 16 grandchildren.