

145 E. 16 St., Apt. 14-C
New York, NY 10003

The Honorable Frank R. Wolf
241 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-4610

Dear Mr. Wolf:

As a historian and author of eight books on the founding fathers, I am happy to write in support of your legislation to re-establish Washington's Birthday on February 22.

In 1782 the Chevalier de Chastellux, a French officer who served with George Washington in the American Revolution, wrote: "This is the seventh year that he has commanded the army and he has obeyed Congress: more need not be said."

A lot more could be said—Washington would serve another year as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army; a working summer as president of the Constitutional Convention; and eight years as President of the United States—but the Chevalier grasped the main point. 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. Many of the revolutions that followed ours ended in tyranny or blood; none was so honorably conducted.

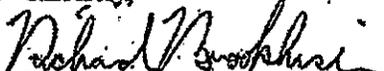
Let me quote another Frenchman, the diplomat and poet Chateaubriand (sometimes foreigners see us more clearly): "Search the forests where Washington's sword gleamed: what do you find? Tombs? No—a world."

He capped his life's work by freeing his slaves in his will—an example that too few Americans followed.

Yet Washington has become disconnected from his own birthday. Celebrating it on the most convenient Monday, and calling it by the lazy shortcut "President's Day," creates the impression that it honors everyone who made it to the White House, or maybe car and furniture sales.

Washington deserves better from us. He certainly did better for us. Giving back his real birthday will help give us back the man.

Sincerely,


Richard Brookhiser