



The University of Georgia

Franklin College of Arts and Sciences
Department of Sociology

November 4, 2011

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

Dear Representative Wolf:

I commit myself to your effort to restore the observance of George Washington's birth to February 22. To enumerate Washington's achievements would be superfluous, but I must say that their significance has been unequalled by his successors. George Washington established political, military, diplomatic, and moral precedents that remain vital and maintain America's greatness to this day. To no person in history do the American people owe a greater debt of gratitude.

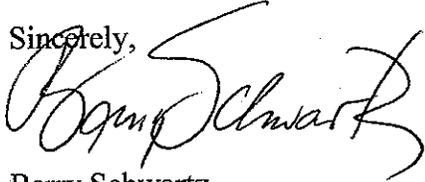
A nation's holidays are the traditional means for expressing gratitude to its great forebears; but holidays remain vital only as long as they are taken seriously. The Great Depression and World War II—the last existential threats to our nation—were the last eras in which George Washington's legacy was embraced. During the years of economic depression and war, newspaper editors marked Washington's Birthday by placing his image on their front pages, above the fold, and printing articles indicating where business, professional, trade, civic, and religious organizations would meet to celebrate. Today, George Washington's legacy is more often dissected than revered, more analyzed than emulated; the typical attitude toward it, at best, is one of mechanical appreciation. Here, precisely, resides the point: as Americans cease to believe in the moral fullness of the past, they lose sight of the link between their present lives and the transformations wrought by their forebears; they lose sight of themselves as historical beings and forget that they have inherited, not created, the most valuable of their possessions.

Loss of historical continuity is evident in the triviality, pointlessness, and amoral confusion of "Presidents' Day." The man whom earlier generations of Americans held in awe and after whom they tried to pattern their lives is now one among scores of smaller men. To celebrate George Washington's birth properly, it must be properly distinguished, and there is no other way to do so than by commemorating it on its exact, not approximate, date. The latter is "good enough" today, but hearts follow the carriers of a nation's most grateful memories. The very effort and cost to restore the true anniversary of the Father of His Country casts unique attention upon this unique man,

reaffirms the ideals he embodied, makes thrilling, even today, his life of sacrifice and public service.

The economic benefits that induced passage of the Monday Holiday Bill in 1968 have been grossly offset in the diminishing certainty of who we are as a nation and where we came from. By reinvigorating Washington's Birthday, we not only distinguish him; we reaffirm the ideals of courage, selflessness, and loyalty; we elevate ourselves and clarify the moral exceptionalism of our nation. Those who restore the commemoration of George Washington to its former place of distinction deserve the gratitude of his countrymen.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barry Schwartz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "B" and "S".

Barry Schwartz
Professor Emeritus
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