The date was initially called Armistice Day to commemorate the end of World War I. It was officially adopted in 1926 through a resolution of the US Congress. The date became a national holiday 12 years later by a similar action by the US Congress.

If World War I had been “the war to end all wars,” as it was called, November 11 could still be called Armistice Day.

However, World War II would prove otherwise. The US government, realizing that peace was equally preserved, after the end of the conflict, among the participating nations, Congress decided to create the day an occasion to honor all those who served the United States (USA).

In 1954, US President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a bill proclaiming November 11 as Veterans Day. Since then, the date would come to recognize veterans of all wars and then all who served in the US Armed Forces.

Soldiers of the 353rd Infantry near a church in Stenay, Meuse, France, wait for an end to hostilities. This photo was on November 11, 1918

In November 1919, President Wilson proclaimed November 11 as the first commemoration of Armistice Day with the following words:

“With gratitude for the victory, both for the thing it freed us from and for the opportunity it gave America to show its sympathy for peace and justice in the councils of nations…”

The original concept for the celebration was for an observed day with parades and public gatherings and a brief suspension of business from 11am.

The United States Congress officially recognized the end of World War I when it passed a competing resolution on June 4, 1926, with these words:

Considering that November 11, 1918, marked the end of the most destructive, bloody, and far-reaching war in human annals, and the resumption by the people of the United States of peaceful relations with other nations, which we hope will never again be broken, and

Considering that the recurring anniversary of this date should be commemorated with thanksgiving, prayers and exercises aimed at perpetuating peace through goodwill and mutual understanding between nations and

Whereas the legislatures of twenty-seven of our states have already declared November 11th a legal holiday: Therefore, be resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives agreeing), that the President of the United States is requested to issue a proclamation calling upon the officials to display the flag of the United States in all government buildings on November 11, and to invite the people of the United States to observe the day in schools and churches, or other suitable places, with appropriate ceremonies of friendly relations with all other peoples.

An Act (52 Stat. 351; 5 US Code, Sec. 87a) passed on May 13, 1938, made November 11 of each year a legal holiday - a day to be dedicated to the cause of world peace and to be celebrated later and known as "Armistice Day". Armistice Day was primarily a day set aside to honor veterans of World War I, but in 1954, after World War II, it called for the largest mobilization of soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen in the nation's history; after American forces fought aggression in Korea, the 83rd Congress, at the request of veterans' service organizations, amended the 1938 Act by eliminating the word "Armistice" and inserting the word "Veterans" in its place. With the passage of this legislation (Public Law 380) on June 1, 1954, November 11 became a day to honor American veterans of all wars.

Later that same year, on October 8, President Dwight D. Eisenhower issued the first "Veterans Day Proclamation" which stated, "To ensure the proper and widespread observance of this anniversary, all veterans, all veterans' organizations and all citizens will want to join hands in a common purpose. To this end, I am appointing the Administrator of Veterans Affairs as Chair of a National Veterans Day Committee, which will include such other persons as the President may select and who will coordinate at the national level the necessary planning for compliance. I am also requesting the heads of all departments and agencies of the Executive branch of Government to assist the National Committee in every way possible."

Veterans Day continues to be observed on November 11th, regardless of which day of the week it falls. Restoring Veterans Day observance to November 11 not only preserves the historic significance of the date, but helps focus attention on the important purpose of Veterans Day: a celebration to honor America's veterans for their patriotism, love of country and willingness to serve and sacrifice for the common good