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Thank you for taking the time to contact me about my amendment to make Juneteenth a federal holiday and provide a fiscal offset by removing Columbus Day as a paid federal holiday. I appreciate the opportunity to hear from you and tell you the background of this story. Contrary to the news stories and social media, I am not trying to end Columbus Day.

I am very aware that this issue has struck a nerve for many people because anarchists and those who want to re-write American history are tearing down statues and monuments around the nation while others stand by and watch. Our nation has a rich history full of great, good, bad and ugly moments and people. For over two centuries we have worked to make a more perfect union, with many mistakes, but it is still our story together. No one should tear down the images of our story or try to obliterate our history.

I recently re-read George Orwell's book, 1984. As you may remember, in that novel the main character works in the government office called, "The Ministry of Truth." His job was to re-write anything in history that did not line up with the current government's position and create new propaganda for the future. I am appalled to see our nation running toward that same line of thinking. The past is something to learn from, not to run from. We do not have to be proud of every moment in our history, but we should not try to erase it either.

Slavery, Jim Crow laws, and segregation are part of our history that we should acknowledge and learn from. The entire nation is talking about race relations again, as we should. We have made a great deal of progress in our nation, but the journey to equality is not yet complete.

Earlier this year, Senator Ed Markey (MA) introduced a bill to make Juneteenth a federal holiday. As you may know, Juneteenth, celebrated annually on June 19 since 1866, marks the anniversary of the day African-Americans in Texas were finally informed of the end of slavery in our nation – they were the last group of slaves to learn that they were finally free. Juneteenth, Emancipation Day, is a day in our history that redefined the meaning of freedom and equality in America.

The week of June 29th, I was informed that Senator Markey's Juneteenth bill was going to move by unanimous consent, meaning every Senator in the Senate had approved of the additional federal holiday. But, when I asked the cost of the new holiday the day

before the final vote, I was told each holiday costs American taxpayers around \$600 million a year for paid time off and bonus holiday pay for federal employees. While I support Senator Markey's bipartisan legislation, I believe we should also remain cognizant of the impact the existing 10 federal holidays have on our nation's more than \$26 trillion debt. Each federal holiday is also another time that Americans cannot get their mail, go to their bank, or get thousands of other federal services.

As such, I joined Senator Ron Johnson's (WI) amendment to remove Columbus Day from the list of federal holidays and instead add Juneteenth. This amendment would save taxpayers \$600 million every year. This amendment does not abolish Columbus Day as a celebrated holiday or attempt to erase history. We would still recognize Christopher Columbus and his impact on our nation without spending an additional \$600 million for an additional paid federal holiday. There are many other recognized holidays we celebrate as a nation that are not federal holidays, such as Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Flag Day, but they are still holidays.

I believe saving federal tax dollars should be considered every time we have a vote. Currently, only 21 states in the nation recognize Columbus Day as a paid holiday. Very few people in the country celebrate Columbus Day with special events or gatherings, even though Columbus is a very significant part of our American history. But, even if the amendment passed, Columbus Day would still remain a recognized holiday.

As chairman of the Regulatory Affairs and Federal Management Subcommittee, which has oversight jurisdiction over the federal workforce, as well as a member of the Financial Services General Government Subcommittee, which appropriates funding for the federal workforce, I will continue to remain engaged on issues related to efficient spending in government operations. Even during this season of massive spending as we fight COVID-19, we should still look for every possible way to save taxpayer dollars and do the right thing for everyone. People work hard across Oklahoma and they do not want their hard earned tax dollars squandered.

Please feel free to contact me again via email at www.lankford.senate.gov for more information about my work in the United States Senate for all of us.

In God We Trust,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Lankford', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

James Lankford
U.S. Senator