**For Release Wednesday, September 1, 2021**

**Capitol View
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**Life Is Good: Labor Day, State Fair and Nebraska Football**

Summer’s last hurrah is upon us. Labor Day is September 6. The University of Nebraska Husker football team has started its season, the State Fair ends on Labor Day and public schools are back in session.

Time was when Labor Day stood out. Moms and Dads didn’t have to go to work that day and that often paved the way for family picnics, backyard barbecues and maybe even a downtown parade. Friends gathered and toasted what would surely be a coming change in the weather. It also often marked the start of public schools, a rite of passage often equally anticipated and cursed.

Things changed drastically in 2020 when Labor Day was just another in a string of holidays cancelled by the Coronavirus pandemic. Many of those activities resumed this year as the dreaded Covid risk dial rolled back to green for a time. But a second surge of Covid – thanks to several variant strains – is casting a pall on things again as the risk dial moves toward red.

That drama known as Husker Football has already begun. The on-field play stage of the saga has started and brings with it optimism for a fan base that has been, to say the least, disappointed in the first three seasons of a new coach, an actual Husker alum who grew up in small town Nebraska and played most of his college ball in Memorial Stadium.

The not-so-behind-the-scenes drama started a couple months ago when Athletic Director Bill Moos resigned abruptly amid speculation he was forced out. Others said he was just tired and blamed the Pandemic. For his part, Moos took a million dollars or so and headed back to the Pacific Northwest. Not bad work if you can get it.

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Moos was replaced by former Husker defensive standout Trev Alberts who also came with the promise of a million dollar a year price tag. Then came word that the NCAA was investigating the football program for possible illegal use of analysts and practice sessions. It’s always something.

Following a year of flooding in 2019, Pandemic woes in 2020 and an on-going debate over financial conditions, the Nebraska State Fair seemed to be back on track in Grand Island with 4-H activities, concerts, food vendors and carnival rides.

But what about Labor Day. Officially, it’s a time to pay tribute to American workers, and their many contributions and achievements through the years. Created by the labor movement in the late 19th century, Labor Day honors the men and women who fought tirelessly for workers' rights, especially the eight-hour workday.

Labor discussions today seem to center on a $15 per-hour minimum wage and what it might do to small businesses. Likewise, there seems to be a problem filling jobs again after pandemic closings and directed health measures, which restricted the size of gatherings in restaurants and entertainment venues. Some have blamed government stimulus checks for making it more lucrative to not work.

Labor Day became a U.S. federal holiday in 1894, but by that time thirty states already officially celebrated the holiday. On September 5, 1882, New York City union leaders organized what is now considered the country’s first Labor Day parade. An estimated 10,000 workers took unpaid time off to march through the streets of New York City, in the event which culminated in a picnic, fireworks, and dancing.

The idea spread across the country as many states passed legislation recognizing the workers' holiday. It wasn’t until 1894, however, that Congress legalized the holiday following the Pullman strike, a nationwide railroad boycott that turned fatal and shined a national spotlight on workers' rights.

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Get this, Congress sought to make peace with American workers by passing an act making Labor Day a legal holiday and President Grover Cleveland officially signed it into law on June 28, 1894.

Now you know enough about the holiday to appreciate it and celebrate it. Hats off to the American worker.

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*J.L. Schmidt has been covering Nebraska government and politics since 1979. He has been a registered Independent for more than 20 years.*