



State Poet

Matt Mason of Omaha was named Nebraska's third state poet by proclamation of Gov. Pete Ricketts on Jan. 30, 2019. Mason is executive director of the Nebraska Writers Collective and served as former board president of the Nebraska Center for the Book. He is the winner of a Pushcart Prize and two Nebraska Book Awards. Mason's work can be found in numerous magazines and anthologies.

William Kloefkorn of Lincoln was named Nebraska's first state poet by proclamation of Gov. Charles Thone on Sept. 11, 1982. A retired English professor at Nebraska Wesleyan University, Kloefkorn served as state poet until his death in 2011.

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U.S. Poet Laureate

The Library of Congress named Garland resident Ted Kooser the U.S. Poet Laureate for 2004-06. Kooser is the author of 12 poetry collections, including "Delights and Shadows," which won the 2005 Pulitzer Prize, "Weather Central" and "Flying at Night." He also has published three children's books and three books of prose, including "Local Wonders; Seasons in the Bohemian Alps." Kooser has won many honors and awards, including four honorary doctorate degrees and two fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts. Ted Kooser Elementary School in Lincoln opened in 2009. Kooser is Presidential Professor of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

SPECIAL DAYS IN NEBRASKA⁷

George W. Norris Day: Jan. 5, to honor the longtime Nebraska politician.

State Day: March 1, the day Nebraska joined the Union in 1867.

Thomas Jefferson Memorial Day: April 13, to honor the U.S. president.

Workers Memorial Day: April 28, in remembrance of the courage and integrity of U.S. workers.

State Fire Day: Friday before Fire Recognition Day in May, to call public attention to the great damage that fire causes to life and property.

Fire Recognition Day: Second Saturday in May. Exercises appropriate for the subject and day may be conducted by any fire department.

Pioneers' Memorial Day: Second Sunday in June, in recognition of those who served and sacrificed as pioneers in the settlement of Nebraska.

Nebraska Czech Day: First Sunday in August. The date coincides with the annual

⁷ Source: Nebraska Revised Statutes.

Czech Festival at Wilber, which has been designated the Czech capital of Nebraska and the United States.

John G. Neihardt Day: First Sunday in August, to honor the writer and Nebraska poet laureate.

Howard's Day: Sept. 2, the birthday of John Howard, author of prison reform throughout the world. Observed in the state's correctional institutions.

American Indian Day: Fourth Monday in September, to honor the first residents of Nebraska and recognize their contributions to the state.

Pulaski's Memorial Day: Oct. 11, to commemorate the death of Revolutionary War hero Casimir Pulaski. The brigadier general died of wounds suffered in the siege of Savannah, Ga., on Oct. 11, 1779.

White Cane Safety Day: Oct. 15, to recognize the importance of the white cane as a symbol of independence for blind people and to remind citizens of the need to keep streets, sidewalks and other public places safe and functional for people with disabilities.

Arbor Day⁸

Arbor Day is a nationally celebrated observance that encourages tree planting and tree care. The first Arbor Day was celebrated in Nebraska in 1872, in response to a state proclamation urging settlers and homesteaders to plant trees that would provide shade, shelter, fruit, fuel and beauty for residents of the largely treeless plains. On that first Arbor Day, more than 1 million trees were planted in Nebraska.

The Arbor Day idea was promoted by J. Sterling Morton, editor of the *Nebraska City News*. He later helped spread the idea to neighboring states and eventually to all U.S. states and many other nations.

Today, Arbor Day celebrations are held all over the United States, with the date determined by the best tree planting times in each area. In Nebraska, Arbor Day is observed on the last Friday in April, which also is when National Arbor Day is observed. The Arbor Day Foundation, which encourages tree planting and environmental stewardship, has its headquarters in Morton's hometown of Nebraska City.

To learn more about the foundation and how to celebrate Arbor Day, visit www.arborday.org.



⁸ Source: Arbor Day Foundation.

Legal Holidays in Nebraska

New Year's Day	Jan. 1
Martin Luther King Jr. Day	Third Monday in January
Presidents' Day	Third Monday in February
Arbor Day	Last Friday in April
Memorial Day	Last Monday in May
Independence Day	July 4
Labor Day	First Monday in September
Indigenous Peoples' Day and Columbus Day	Second Monday in October
Veterans Day	Nov. 11
Thanksgiving Day	Fourth Thursday in November
Day After Thanksgiving	Friday after Fourth Thursday in November
Christmas Day	Dec. 25

State Song

The 1967 Legislature declared "Beautiful Nebraska," composed by Jim Fras, to be the state's official song.