

## Presidential Documents

Proclamation 6825 of September 16, 1995

### Citizenship Day and Constitution Week, 1995

By the President of the United States of America

#### A Proclamation

Americans, unlike many other peoples, are linked to one another neither by the confines of geography nor by centuries of tradition. Instead, we base our citizenship on a foundation of shared ideals and ideas, bringing gifts from every country, race, and culture. Those whose ancestors came to these shores long ago and first-generation immigrants alike -- all are bound by the unique set of principles set forth in the documents that established and continue to define this Nation.

We find our heritage in profound words: in the declaration that all men are created equal, endowed with unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; in the invitation of liberty extended to the tired, the poor, the huddled masses yearning to breathe free; and in the pledge to remain one Nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all.

Perhaps the greatest expression of our national identity is the United States Constitution. Adopted on September 17, 1787, the Constitution describes the parameters of our Government and the rights and responsibilities that accompany American citizenship. From its phrases we derive our precious rights to free expression and religious liberty, and we assume the responsibilities of electing our leaders and participating in the workings of government.

Yet the genius of the Constitution is not simply in forming "a more perfect Union," but in framing an ideal and providing a means for progress toward its realization. As Abraham Lincoln once stated, our Founding Fathers "meant to set up a standard maxim for free society, which should be familiar to all, and revered by all; constantly looked to, constantly labored for, and even though never perfectly attained, constantly approximated, and thereby constantly spreading and deepening its influence, and augmenting the happiness and value of life to all people of all colors everywhere."

Indeed, this bold experiment in self-government has inspired more than 200 years of striving for true justice and freedom. From the beginning, there was a dissonance between the plain meaning of our creed and the reality of American life, and constitutional history reflects the vital changes wrought by amendments, civil war, and tremendous social transformations. Emancipation, women's suffrage, civil rights, voting rights—all these began as the struggles of citizens who joined together to push our Nation toward the ideals enshrined in our Constitution and whose efforts were encouraged by the Constitution itself.

In honor of the paramount importance of the Constitution in setting forth the fundamental doctrines of our country and in recognition of the role each American must play in bringing these words to life, the Congress, by joint resolution of February 29, 1952 (36 U.S.C. 153), designated September 17 as "Citizenship Day," and by joint resolution of August 2, 1956 (36 U.S.C. 159), requested the President to proclaim the week beginning September 17 and ending September 23 of each year as "Constitution Week."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim September 17, 1995, as Citizenship Day and September 17 through September 23, 1995, as Constitution Week. I

call upon Federal, State, and local officials, as well as leaders of civic, educational, and religious organizations, to conduct meaningful ceremonies and programs in their schools, churches, and other community gathering places to foster a better understanding of the Constitution and the rights and duties of citizenship.

I further call upon the officials of the Government to display the flag of the United States on all Government buildings on September 17, 1995, in honor of Citizenship Day.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this sixteenth day of September, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twentieth.



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