
Presidential Documents

Title 3—**Proclamation 6995 of April 22, 1997****The President****Law Day, U.S.A., 1997****By the President of the United States of America****A Proclamation**

This is the 40th year that Americans have celebrated the first day of May as Law Day, a special time to reflect on our legal heritage. It is an opportunity for all Americans to pause and consider how the rule of law has contributed to the freedoms we enjoy, and to our greatness as a Nation.

The theme of this year's Law Day commemoration, "Celebrate Your Freedom," focuses on the one concept that most defines us as a Nation. It was freedom that we fought for when we created this country. It is freedom that still sets us apart from many of the world's nations. And it is freedom's lamp that still beckons the oppressed to America from all parts of the globe.

The quest to ensure our freedom is the essence of what it means to be an American, and the bulwark of our freedom is the law and the legal system. James Madison once observed that if men were angels, governments would not be necessary. Laws are the instruments by which the people, through their government, protect themselves from, and regulate their relations with, each other. At the same time, laws also serve to restrain the power of that government. Finding the proper balance between the conflicting interests and rights of individuals, corporations, and government has never been easy. But we rely on the rule of law itself to protect all that is most precious to us. Without it, other nations have descended into a state where force alone prevails and justice is a mere hope.

Thanks to the genius of our Founders and the Constitutional system they created, Americans have witnessed the steady march of progress toward an open, inclusive society. We vote in free, fair elections. We worship according to our own faith. We associate freely with whomever we choose. And we are able to express our disagreements with our government freely and openly. These rights, routinely accepted today, have been maintained only through years of testing and reinforcement in our Federal and State courts, which have continued to extend freedom and liberty across the land.

So when we celebrate our freedom, we also celebrate a system of law that makes freedom possible. For more than two centuries, we have prospered and endured because we have relied on that system of law. We must keep that system strong and vibrant in our national life.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, in accordance with Public Law 87-20 of April 7, 1961, do hereby proclaim May 1, 1997, as Law Day. I urge the people of the United States to use this occasion to consider anew how our laws protect our freedoms and contribute to our national well-being. I call upon members of the legal profession, civic associations, educators, librarians, public officials, and the media to promote the observance of this day with appropriate programs and activities. I also call upon public officials to display the flag of the United States on all government buildings throughout the day.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-second day of April, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

William Clinton

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