Public Law 101-139
101st Congress

Joint Resolution

Nov. 3, 1989
[S.J. Res. 120]

To designate the period commencing November 12, 1989, and ending November 18, 1989, as "Geography Awareness Week".

Whereas geography is the study of people, their environments, and their resources;

Whereas the United States of America is a truly unique nation with diverse landscapes, bountiful resources, a distinctive multiethnic population, and a rich cultural heritage, all of which contribute to the status of the United States as a world power;

Whereas, historically, geography has aided Americans in understanding the wholeness of their vast nation and the great abundance of its natural resources;

Whereas geography today offers perspectives and information in understanding ourselves, our relationship to the Earth, and our interdependence with other peoples of the world;

Whereas statistics illustrate that a significant number of American students could not find the United States on a world map, could not identify Alaska and Texas as the Nation's largest States, and could not name the New England States;

Whereas, according to a recent Gallup poll, Americans ranked among the bottom third on an international test of geography knowledge, and those age eighteen to twenty-four came in last;

Whereas geography has been offered to fewer than one in ten United States secondary school students as part of the curriculum;

Whereas departments of geography are being eliminated from American institutes of higher learning, thus endangering the discipline of geography in the United States;

Whereas traditional geography has virtually disappeared from the curricula of American schools while still being taught as a basic subject in other countries, including the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, and the Soviet Union;

Whereas an ignorance of geography, foreign languages, and cultures places the United States at a disadvantage with other countries in matters of business, politics, and the environment;

Whereas the United States is a nation of worldwide involvements and global influence, the responsibilities of which demand an understanding of the lands, languages, and cultures of the world;

Whereas, one-third of adult Americans cannot name four of the sixteen NATO member nations, and another one-third cannot name any; and

Whereas national attention must be focused on the integral role that knowledge of world geography plays in preparing citizens of the United States for the future of an increasingly interdependent and interconnected world: Now, therefore, be it

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Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the period commencing November 12, 1989, and ending November 18, 1989, is designated as "Geography Awareness Week", and the President is authorized and requested to issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to observe such week with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

Approved November 3, 1989.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—S.J. Res. 120:

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 135 (1989):
June 9, considered and passed Senate.
Oct. 24, considered and passed House.