

his wife, B.A.; and former Gov. Ann Richards of Texas.

**Proclamation 7260—Bicentennial  
Commemoration of the Death of  
George Washington**

*December 13, 1999*

*By the President of the United States  
of America*

**A Proclamation**

Few individuals in history have had a more profound and lasting effect on a nation and its people than has George Washington. His character, convictions, and vision shaped our Republic in its crucial formative years and started us on the great American journey that continues to this day.

At every moment of challenge or peril in the early history of our Nation, George Washington emerged as a leader of uncommon wisdom and steadfast dedication to the ideals of service. A brilliant warrior, he held together a small, undisciplined army with the force of his personality and the trust he inspired in his men, ultimately leading them to victory in the American Revolution. When the Constitutional Convention began in Philadelphia in 1787, the delegates turned to George Washington to lead their efforts to create a Constitution for the American people. Elected unanimously to preside over the Convention, Washington helped to craft the blueprint for our democracy that has inspired freedom-loving peoples across the globe for more than 2 centuries.

As the first President of the United States, George Washington used his power wisely and with restraint, recognizing that his actions would set enduring precedents and traditions for the leaders who would follow him. He set a steady course for our fledgling Nation, keeping us free from entanglement in foreign conflicts, laying the foundations for financial stability and economic prosperity, maintaining a strong defense to preserve our independence and security, and ensuring above all the protection of Americans' rights and freedoms. And, in relinquishing his office at the appointed time, he established by example the peaceful transition of power that has become the hallmark of our democracy.

Near midnight on December 14, 1799, America's great warrior, statesman, and leader took his final breath. His last words were, "Tis well." Due in large part to the early guiding hand of George Washington, it has been well for our Nation ever since. Now, 200 years later, as America continues its journey into a new century, it is fitting that we acknowledge our enduring debt to this great man.

The Congress, by Senate Concurrent Resolution 83, has requested the President to proclaim December 14, 1999, as a day to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the death of George Washington.

**Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton,** by the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and laws of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim December 14, 1999, as the Bicentennial Commemoration of the Death of George Washington. I call upon the people of the United States to mark this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities, paying tribute to the life and achievements of George Washington and his contributions to our Nation. As a further mark of respect, I hereby order that the flag of the United States shall be flown at half-staff upon all public buildings and grounds, at all military posts and naval stations, and on all naval vessels of the Federal Government in the District of Columbia and throughout the United States and its Territories and possessions on Tuesday, December 14, 1999. I also direct that the flag shall be flown at half-staff on that day at all United States embassies, legations, consular offices, and other facilities abroad, including all military facilities and naval vessels and stations.

**In Witness Whereof,** I have hereunto set my hand this thirteenth day of December, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

**William J. Clinton**

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., December 16, 1999]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 14, and

it was published in the *Federal Register* on December 17.

### **Remarks on the Lands Legacy Initiative**

*December 14, 1999*

Thank you very much. Secretary Babbitt and George Frampton and all the members of our administration are glad to welcome the environmental leaders who are here today.

At the dawn of this century, Theodore Roosevelt defined America's great central task as "leaving this land even a better land for our descendants than it is for us." This is the vision of environmental stewardship that has inspired our lands legacy initiative, the historic plan I unveiled earlier this year to protect America's threatened green and open spaces.

Two weeks ago I had the great honor of signing into law the funding for this lands legacy initiative. Although much of the news of that day concentrated on budget victories for education and public safety, it was also a remarkable day for the environment. With one stroke of the pen, we made it possible to add hundreds of thousands of acres to our children's endowment of natural wonders, places like New Mexico's Baca Ranch, home to one of North America's largest herds of wild elk.

Today, I will be sending to Congress a list of 18 additional natural and historic sites we propose to protect with new lands legacy funding. Our list includes sections of Hawaii's Hakalau Forest, which supports hundreds of species of rare plants and birds. It includes critical habitat on Florida's Pelican Island, where Theodore Roosevelt established the Nation's very first wildlife preserve. It includes the birth home and burial place of Martin Luther King, Jr.

We now have funding to protect all these places. We have willing sellers, and we look forward to speedy review by the appropriate committees in Congress.

I'm also pleased to report on the status of yet another effort to protect the lands we hold sacred. A year ago I asked Secretary Babbitt to report to me on unique and fragile places that deserve to be protected as na-

tional monuments. This morning, Secretary Babbitt presented me with his recommendation that I use my executive authority to create three new national monuments in Arizona and California and to significantly expand another in California. Each of the sites already belongs to the American people, and no land purchases would be required. But giving these lands national monument status would ensure they will be passed along to future generations, healthy and whole.

The first of the proposed new monuments is located on the northern rim of the Grand Canyon, and it consists of stunning canyons and lonely buttes shaped by the hand of God over millions of years. The second, a desert region in the shadow of rapidly expanding Phoenix, is an archaeological treasure trove containing some of the most extraordinary prehistoric ruins and petroglyphs in the American Southwest. The third, off the coast of California, would encompass thousands of small islands and reefs that serve as essential habitat for sea otters and sea birds forced from the shore by extensive development. Finally, this proposal calls for expanding California's Pinnacles National Monument, the site of the spectacular volcanic spires and mountain caves.

Secretary Babbitt's recommendations come as a result of careful analysis and extensive discussions with local citizen, State and local officials, and with Members of Congress. And I will take them very seriously. I expect to make a decision on the sites early next year.

Like Theodore Roosevelt, I believe there are certain places humankind simply cannot improve upon, places whose beauty and interest no photograph could capture, places you simply have to see for yourself. We must use this time of unparalleled prosperity to ensure people will always be able to see these places as we see them today.

There is no greater gift we can offer to the new millennium than to protect these treasures for all Americans for all time.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:52 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.