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Citizenship Day and Constitution Week, 1981

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Daniel Webster once wrote, "We may be tossed upon an ocean where we can see no land—nor, perhaps, the sun or stars. But there is a chart and a compass for us to study, to consult, and to obey. The chart is the Constitution."

September 17, 1981, marks the 194th anniversary of our Constitution. Its Framers scarcely could have conceived of the timelessness of the document they so carefully drafted. They prepared a Constitution to meet the needs of a fledgling nation. Yet today, amid the complexities of the twentieth century, that same Constitution, with only several amendments, serves a nation whose territory spans a continent and whose population exceeds two hundred and twenty-five million. With the passing of each year, it becomes increasingly evident that, in the words of Chief Justice John Marshall, our Constitution will "endure for ages to come."

The Constitution establishes the Congress, the Executive, and the Judiciary, and through a deliberate allocation of authority, it defines the limits of each upon the others. It particularizes the liberties which, as free men and women, we insist upon, and it constrains both Federal and State powers to ensure that those precious liberties are faithfully protected. It is our blueprint for freedom, our commitment to ourselves and to each other.

It is by choice, not by imposition, that the Constitution is the supreme law of our Land. As we approach the bicentennial of this charter, each of us has a personal obligation to acquaint ourselves with it and with its central role in guiding our Nation. While a constitution may set forth rights and liberties, only the citizens can maintain and guarantee those freedoms. Active and informed citizenship is not just a right; it is a duty.

In recognition of the paramount importance of the Constitution to our Nation, and in recognition of all who have attained the status of United States citizens, the Congress by joint resolution on February 29, 1952 (36 U.S.C. Section 153), designated September 17th as Citizenship Day, and by joint resolution of August 2, 1956 (36 U.S.C. Section 159), requested the President to proclaim the week beginning September 17th and ending September 23rd of each year as Constitution Week.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, call upon appropriate Government officials to display the flag of the United States on all Government buildings on Citizenship Day, September 17, 1981. I urge Federal, State