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Flag Day and National Flag Week, 1983

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Two hundred eight years ago, the first distinctive American flags were flown over the colonial defenses during the Battle of Bunker Hill. One flag was an adaptation of the British Blue Ensign while the other had a new design. Both flags bore a pine tree, symbol of the struggle colonial Americans undertook to wrest their land from the forests.

As the colonials moved toward a final separation from Britain, other flags with various symbols appeared to inform the world of the hopes, dreams, and challenges of the new Nation. Many of the early American flags carried such mottoes as "Liberty or Death" or "Don't Tread on Me" to reflect the courage and quest for freedom which motivated our forefathers and gave birth to our Nation.

Two years after the Battle of Bunker Hill, the Continental Congress chose a flag which, tellingly, expressed the unity and resolve of the patriots who had banded together to seek independence. The delegates voted "that the flag of the thirteen United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field representing a new constellation." Two centuries later, with the addition of thirty-seven stars, this flag still symbolizes our shared commitment to freedom and equality. It carries a message of hope to the downtrodden, opportunity to the oppressed, and peace to all mankind.

As challenges face our Nation today, the "Stars and Stripes" continues to remind each of us of the sacrifices and determination which built this Nation. It signals the great land of opportunity that our forefathers carved out of the wilderness and gave their lives to make free so many years ago.

Now it is our responsibility to remember the great price that has been paid to keep our flag flying free today and our privilege to ensure that it will keep flying free for future generations.

To commemorate the adoption of our flag, the Congress, by a joint resolution approved August 3, 1949 (63 Stat. 492), designated June 14 of each year as Flag Day and requested the President to issue an annual proclamation calling for its observance and the display of the flag of the United States on all Government buildings. The Congress also requested the President, by a joint resolution approved June 9, 1966 (80 Stat. 194), to issue annually a proclamation designating the week in which June 14 occurs as National Flag Week and calling upon all citizens of the United States to display the flag during that week.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby designate June 14, 1983, as Flag Day and the week beginning June 12, 1983, as National Flag Week, and I direct the appropriate officials of the Government to display the flag on all government buildings during that week. I also urge all Americans to observe Flag Day, June 14, and National Flag Week by flying the "Stars and Stripes" from their homes and other suitable places.

I also urge the American people to celebrate those days from Flag Day through Independence Day, set aside by Congress as a time to honor America (89 Stat. 211), by having public gatherings and activities at which they can honor their country in an appropriate manner.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 10th day of May, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and seventh.

Ronald Reagan