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Citizenship Day and Constitution Week, 1986

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

In this coming year, as we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the signing of the Constitution of the United States, all Americans should reflect upon the precious heritage of liberty under law passed on to us by our Founding Fathers. This heritage finds its most comprehensive expression in our Constitution.

The framing of the Constitution was an arduous task accomplished in the spirit of cooperation and with dedication to the ideals of republican self-government and unalienable God-given human rights that gave transcendent meaning and inspiration to the American Revolution. After extensive debate and public participation, the Constitution was ratified by the several States. The wisdom and foresight of the architects of the Constitution are manifest in the fact that it remains a powerful governing tool to the present day. Indeed, a great British statesman has called it "the most wonderful work ever struck off at a given time by the brain and purpose of man."

For 200 years, people from other lands have come to the United States to participate in the great adventure in self-government begun in Philadelphia in 1787. It is no surprise that knowledge of the Constitution is one of the primary requirements for new citizens. In this bicentennial year, all citizens should reread and study this great document and rededicate themselves to the ideals it enshrines.

In recognition of the fundamental importance of our Constitution to our way of life and the role of our citizens in shaping government policies at all levels, the Congress, by joint resolution of February 29, 1952 (36 U.S.C. 153), has designated September 17 of each year as Citizenship Day and authorized the President to issue annually a proclamation calling upon officials of the government to display the flag on all government buildings on that day. The Congress also, by joint resolution of August 2, 1956 (36 U.S.C. 159), requested the President to proclaim the week beginning September 17 and ending September 23 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, 1986. I urge Federal, State, and local officials, as well as leaders of civic, educational, and religious organizations to conduct ceremonies and programs that day to commemorate the occasion.

I proclaim the week beginning September 17 and ending September 23, 1986, as Constitution Week, and I urge all Americans to observe that week with appropriate ceremonies and activities in their schools, churches, and other suitable places.

Furthermore, I proclaim that effective September 17, 1986, the area designated as Constitution Gardens, a part of West Potomac Park in our Nation's Capital, to be henceforth a "Living Legacy" dedicated to the commemoration of the United States Constitution.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this seventeenth day of September, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and eleventh.

Ronald Reagan