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## Hugo Lafayette Black Day, 1986

*By the President of the United States of America*

### A Proclamation

February 27, 1986 marks the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Hugo Lafayette Black, one of the most respected and influential Justices to serve on the Supreme Court in this century.

Hugo Black's tenure on the Supreme Court lasted for 34 years, from 1937 to 1971, from the days in which America was struggling to free itself from the effects of the Depression, through World War II and its aftermath, and through the turbulent decade of the 1960s. At the time of his appointment to the Court, Hugo Black was serving as a Senator from Alabama.

Justice Black was a strong believer in a written Constitution, as an instrument to assure control of the government by the people, by virtue of restraints specifically embodied in the document to limit governmental power and protect minorities of whatever race, creed, or ideological persuasion. He once called the Constitution his "legal bible." He cherished every word of it, he said, because it is our surest guarantee that this Nation will endure "strong and great through countless ages."

Throughout his tenure, Justice Black fought to maintain the vital principle of separation of powers. He strongly resisted what he regarded as unauthorized efforts of judges to supersede the judgment of the elected representatives of the people and to substitute their own views of appropriate social and economic policy.

This proud Son of the South played a leading role in the Supreme Court's effort to eliminate racial segregation from our society and ensure equal rights for all persons.

Justice Black's long and distinguished career also was marked by his commitment to the Bill of Rights, including most notably a strong belief in freedom of speech, and the importance of a free press to the governance of a democracy. He also was a strong believer in unhindered access to the political process for all persons and to the core procedural protections afforded by the Constitution.

Hugo Black's formal accomplishments as Senator and Justice and his contributions to American jurisprudence cannot overshadow his warmth as a human being, the intimate collegial relationships he developed with colleagues, and remarkable gift for friendship that helped the Supreme Court function effectively through some of the most turbulent episodes in its history.

In order to honor Hugo Lafayette Black as a defender of freedom and dedicated public servant, the Congress of the United States, by Senate Joint Resolution 59, has designated February 27, 1986 as "Hugo Lafayette Black Day" and authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of the one hundredth anniversary of his birth.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim February 27, 1986 as Hugo Lafayette Black Day, and I call upon the people of the United States to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fourth day of February, 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 tenth.

*Ronald Reagan*