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Geography Awareness Week, 1988

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The United States of America is a unique and great land with a diverse ethnic population and an extraordinary international role. Geographical influences that have helped determine the discovery and development of this country, and global conditions that have given rise to wave after wave of immigration to our shores, make ours a history that cannot be understood without a ready knowledge of world geography. In order for our Nation to maintain its special heritage and retain its position of global economic and political leadership, it is essential that our citizens have a sound appreciation of basic geographical facts and principles.

Today, however, as recent studies—including a major report last summer from the National Geographic Society—have affirmed, many young people and adults lack knowledge of elementary geography. The situation among 18- to 24-year-olds is particularly disturbing, with these young Americans ranking last in basic knowledge in this multinational report.

We can do better. A free society has no greater enemy than ignorance, and there is no greater waste than the underuse of a child's God-given ability to learn and explore. Fortunately, our Nation has begun to give new attention in the past decade to the need for educational reform and educational focus. Young people need to be challenged early and often; and subjects like geography, and closely related studies like history and civics, can be taught in ways that promote curiosity and help young people stretch their minds and engage their imaginations as they view the map and all the many frontiers and horizons it charts.

Truly we live in a world rich in wonder, variety, and mystery. During Geography Awareness Week, 1988, we can resolve to share more of these qualities with our children and to encourage them in their understanding of the social, economic, and political influence of geographic issues and conditions.

The Congress, by Public Law 100-391, has designated the period beginning November 13 and ending November 19, 1988, as "Geography Awareness Week" and has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation to recognize this observance.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the week of November 13 through November 19, 1988, as Geography Awareness Week. I urge educational institutions, parents, and all Americans to celebrate this observance with appropriate activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this second day of November, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirteenth.

Ronald Reagan