



Citizenship Day and Constitution Week, 1988

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Two centuries and more ago, America was blessed with the vision of freedom and with the will and ability to achieve and sustain it for posterity. We founded a Republic in which "We the People" would set limits on the power of government, and not the other way around—in which government would be forever bound to respect and to preserve life and liberty for everyone alike. The Nation thus begun was no accident, but rather the creation of men and women of character, idealism, and incredible capacity for self-sacrifice in our country's cause. All throughout our history, in peace and in war, Americans have loved and labored in defense of our Independence and our rights. For these reasons, and because freedom has enemies in every generation, Citizenship Day and Constitution Week ought to remind each of us that we must never take for granted our existence as a free land.

The men of genius who pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor as they signed our Declaration of Independence did not take our liberty or our citizenship as Americans for granted. Neither did those who painstakingly framed our Constitution and held for the Bill of Rights during our days as a fledgling Nation. Those who have served and sacrificed in uniform through the centuries have surely taken the blessings of liberty very seriously. So have the millions of immigrants who have braved countless obstacles to reach the safety and freedom of our shores.

Remembrance of the heritage of liberty and love of country embodied in our citizenship and Constitution is our duty and delight as Americans. We are continuing to celebrate the Bicentennial of the Constitution, as well as its ratification and the adoption of the Bill of Rights, with appropriate themes and programs through 1991; each of us now should offer our allegiance anew as we pledge to live by the principles of our land and to do our part in preserving liberty for the generations yet unborn.

We will have a special chance to do this during Constitution Week, 1988, because the Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution is recommending, and I am encouraging, that schools, social clubs, and community organizations make it possible for local citizens who so desire to affirm their citizenship by taking this oath of citizenship: "I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; and that I will well and faithfully discharge my duties and responsibilities as a citizen of the United States."

We should do so while keeping in mind the truth that Dwight David Eisenhower, then Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in Europe, expressed eloquently during the dark days of World War II: "The winning of freedom is not to be compared to the winning of a game—with the victory recorded forever in history. Freedom has its life in the hearts, the actions, the spirits of men and so must be daily earned and refreshed—else like a flower cut from its life-giving roots, it will wither and die."

The Congress, by joint resolution of February 29, 1952 (36 U.S.C. 153), designated September 17 as "Citizenship Day" in commemoration of the signing of the Constitution and in recognition of all who, by birth or by naturalization, have attained the status of citizenship, 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. Also, by joint resolution of August 2, 1956 (36 U.S.C. 159), the Congress designated the week beginning September 17 and ending September 23 of each year as "Constitution Week" in recognition of the historic importance of the Constitution and the significant role it plays in our lives today.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim September 17, 1988, as Citizenship Day and call upon appropriate government officials to display the flag of the United States on all government buildings. I urge Federal, State, and local officials, as well as leaders of civic and educational organizations, to conduct ceremonies and programs that day to commemorate the occasion.

Furthermore, I proclaim the week beginning September 17 and ending September 23, 1988, as Constitution Week, and I urge all Americans to observe that week with appropriate ceremonies and activities, including the aforementioned oath of citizenship, in their schools and other suitable places.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this seventh day of September, 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