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Citizenship Day and Constitution Week, 1984

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

September 17, 1984, marks the 197th anniversary of the signing of our Constitution. As the bicentennial of this dynamic and timeless document nears, all Americans should become reacquainted with its role as our great country's guiding beacon. With this document as its blueprint, this Nation has become the finest example in history of the principle of government by law, in which every individual is guaranteed certain inalienable rights. Exemplifying this precept, a newly naturalized citizen once wrote:

"After our arrival here we very soon realized that the U.S.A. is really a wonderland: It is the first one among the few countries in the world where liberty, justice, democracy, and happiness are not only not empty slogans, but real benefits for all; where the Constitution is still as valid as it was in those days when the people of the U.S.A. ordained and established it in order to secure the blessings of liberty for themselves and their posterity. It was just natural that our next wish could not be other than to become a citizen of this wonderful country.

"And now, a few minutes after we solemnly pledged allegiance to the flag of the United States, we have just one more wish, that may God give us a long life, and ability to help at our very best in holding this flag straight up, flying as free and clear forever as it has been doing from the beginning of this country."

The Constitution provides a framework for our continuous striving to make a better America. It provides the basic balance between each branch of government, limits the power of that government, and guarantees to each of us as citizens our most basic rights. The Constitution, however, is only the outline of our system of government. It is through each individual citizen living out the ideals of the Constitution that we reach for a full expression of those ideals. Therefore, while we celebrate Citizenship Day and Constitution Week, let us rededicate ourselves to a full realization of the potential of the great country which the Founding Fathers struggled to create more than two hundred years ago.

Once each year, on September 17, all four pages of the original signed Constitution are placed on public exhibition in the Rotunda of the National Archives building in Washington, D.C. I encourage all Americans to take the opportunity to view this document, which embodies our national commitment to freedom.

In recognition of the importance of our Constitution and the role of our citizenry in shaping our government, the Congress, by joint resolution of February 29, 1952 (36 U.S.C. 153), designated September 17th 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 17th and ending September 23rd 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, 1984. 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 also proclaim the week beginning September 17 and ending September 23, 1984, 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.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this thirty-first day of May, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and eighth.

Ronald Reagan