



Religious Freedom Day, 1994

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

This past year, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 was enacted, reaffirming our solemn commitment to protect the first guarantee of our Bill of Rights. In the great tradition of our Nation's founders, this legislation embraces the abiding principle that our laws and institutions must neither impede nor hinder, but rather preserve and promote, religious liberty. As it is inscribed on the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia, the words of Leviticus ring out, "Proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof." Our government did not create this liberty, but it cannot be too vigilant in securing its blessings.

It is no accident of authorship that the right to free exercise of religion is the first freedom granted by our Bill of Rights. The framers of the Constitution well recognized the awesome power of religious liberty, not only to unite the citizenry in common cause, but also to empower us to question age-old beliefs and lift this Nation toward enlightenment. Today, as we face a crisis of conscience in our families and communities, as children murder children in our schools, as neighbor turns away from neighbor on frightening city streets—today, more than ever, we see the fundamental wisdom of our country's forefathers. For at the heart of this most precious right is a challenge to use the spiritual freedom we have been afforded to examine the values, the soul, and the true essence of human nature.

Religious freedom helps to give America's people a character independent of their government, fostering the formation of individual codes of ethics, without which a democracy cannot survive. For more than two centuries, this freedom has enabled us to live together in a peace unprecedented in the history of nations. To be both the world's strongest democracy and its most truly multi-ethnic society is a victory of human spirit we must not take for granted. For as many issues as there are that divide us in this society, there remain values that all of us share. We believe in respecting the bond between parents and children. We believe in honoring the worth of honest labor. We believe in treating each other generously and with kindness. We are striving to accept our differences and to find strength in the dreams we all hold dear.

On this day, let us hear the sound of the Liberty Bell as a clarion call to action. Let us face with renewed determination the problems that beset our communities. Let us replace the instability and intolerance with security and justice. Regardless of our faith, let us be each other's guides along the open path toward peace.

The Congress, by Senate Joint Resolution 154, has designated January 16, 1994, as "Religious Freedom Day" and has requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this day.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the day of January 16, 1994, as Religious Freedom Day. I call upon the people of the United States to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities, and I urge them to reaffirm their devotion to the principles of religious freedom.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this fourteenth day of January, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and eighteenth.

William J. Clinton