

Proclamation 5799 of April 20, 1988

**Law Day, U.S.A., 1988**

*By the President of the United States of America  
A Proclamation*

For more than three decades our country has observed May 1 as Law Day, U.S.A., in grateful recognition that our free Republic is a government of laws, not men. On Law Day, U.S.A., we join in proud commemoration of America's legacy of liberty, justice, and self-government, and we pause to salute those past and present who have served and sacrificed to win and protect our freedom and to preserve law and tranquility in our communities—including the men and women of law enforcement whose daily courage and dedication make our laws and liberties a living reality.

Because ours is a government by consent of the people, we are our own lawgivers; hence, the virtuousness of our laws depends on our individual and civic virtues. That is truly something to remember on any Law Day, U.S.A., but especially in a national election year, when we recall how important it is that each of us be familiar with our rights and liberties and with the legal and political guarantees of our freedoms. Only through knowledge, awareness, and love of country can we take full part in the self-government that is ours as Americans to perpetuate.

This is why all Americans of legal voting age should make up their minds, this year and each year, to vote in every election for which they are eligible and to observe all election laws faithfully. By voting, we have our say in who our representatives are and thereby in the shaping of laws that affect us, our communities, our States, and our Nation. We should always remember that those who vote not only demonstrate their voice in public affairs but also exercise one of the precious rights for which brave people around the globe today fight and die just as did our ancestors. Let us understand that our voting is a way to keep faith with them, with our fellow citizens, with the brave Americans who defend us at home and abroad, and with all who cherish our American heritage of liberty, justice, and equality before the law.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, in accordance with Public Law 87-20 of April 7, 1961, do hereby proclaim Sunday, May 1, 1988, as Law Day, U.S.A. I urge the people of the United States to use this occasion to reflect on our birthright of freedom, to express gratitude to those who protect our country and our communities, to familiarize themselves with the need to vote, and to encourage and assist others to vote. I ask the legal profession, schools, public bodies, libraries, courts, the communications media, businesses, the clergy, civic service, and fraternal organizations, and all interested individuals and organizations to join in efforts to focus attention on voting. I also call upon all public officials to display the flag of the United States on all government buildings on Law Day, U.S.A.

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

GEORGE BUSH

**Proclamation 5959 of April 21, 1989**

**Law Day, U.S.A., 1989**

*By the President of the United States of America*

*A Proclamation*

For more than 30 years, our Nation has paused each May 1 to observe Law Day, U.S.A. On this day, we celebrate America's legacy of liberty and self-government, guaranteed under law and preserved with the aid of our legal system.

The American legal system plays a vital role in maintaining the balance between individual freedom and civil order. Our Nation's leaders, past and present, have supplemented our rich common law heritage with statutes, rules, and regulations at every level of government. This body of laws not only provides protection for the freedoms guaranteed by our Constitution, it also provides a framework for peacefully resolving disputes, vindicating the rights of individuals, and punishing criminal conduct.

Our Nation has long been committed to ensuring that this system serves all who seek redress of their grievances. That commitment is reflected in the solemn oath taken by all Federal judges before they assume office: the vow to "administer justice without respect to persons, and do equal right to the poor and to the rich." Under that oath, judges must decide every citizen's claim on its merits, not on the basis of the claimant's status.

Despite its many accomplishments, however, our legal system still exhibits a number of imperfections. There remain members of our society for whom the promise of redress for their grievances has not yet been fully realized. Delay in court proceedings and the cost of pursuing legal remedies make it difficult for many Americans to have their claims adjudicated, regardless of their economic means. Others face large hurdles and tremendous frustration—even if they ultimately obtain vindication—because of the frivolous use of legal processes. These problems are particularly distressing to the poor. Many indigent persons are simply precluded from pursuing legal remedies to their grievances. All too often, this exclusion invites disrespect for our judicial system and subsequently undermines the strength of our democracy.

On this Law Day, which is dedicated to the theme of "Access to Justice," we remind ourselves that it is everyone's responsibility to ensure the effectiveness and accessibility of the American justice system. Our Founders asserted that the second goal of the U.S. Constitution was "to establish justice." Because of the central role of the rule of law in preserving our freedom in this constitutional democracy, all Americans should concern themselves with improving the Nation's justice system. All of us can participate