

**Proclamation 8998 of July 19, 2013****Captive Nations Week, 2013**

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

As citizens of the oldest democracy on earth, we believe that all people are created equal with certain inalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Together, we have kept that most basic promise shining bright for more than two centuries—upholding civil rights and expanding their reach, advancing freedom’s march and widening the circle of opportunity for all.

Our commitment to universal rights is also a foundation for American leadership abroad. In the course of our Nation’s history, countries worldwide have pledged themselves to a Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Corrupt dictatorships have given way to new democracies, forcing out the stale air of authoritarian rule with a fresh breath of freedom.

We know that work is not yet complete. Even as the light of liberty and justice has spread across the globe, too many people still labor in the darkness of tyranny and oppression. In too many parts of the world, fundamental freedoms remain unrealized, and the protections of law extend only to a privileged few.

Captive Nations Week is an opportunity to reaffirm America’s role in advancing human rights worldwide. It is a task that can begin here, with the example we set and the understanding that we are stronger when all our people are granted opportunity—no matter what they look like, where they worship, or who they love. And it can continue by extending a hand to those who reach for freedom abroad. Different peoples will determine their own paths. But we must reject the notion that those who live in distant places do not yearn for freedom, self-determination, dignity, and the rule of law, just as we do.

When President Dwight D. Eisenhower first marked this day, he noted that it should recur “until such time as freedom and independence shall have been achieved for all the captive nations of the world.” We have come a long way since then—but despite our progress, that time has not yet come. So let us keep striving to bring it about—supporting those who seek the same freedoms we enjoy as Americans, and extending the blessings of peace and prosperity here at home and around the world.

The Congress, by joint resolution approved July 17, 1959 (73 Stat. 212), has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation designating the third week of July of each year as “Captive Nations Week.”

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim July 21 through July 27, 2013, as Captive Nations Week. I call upon the people of the United States to reaffirm our deep ties to all governments and people committed to freedom, dignity, and opportunity for all.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this nineteenth day of July, in the year of our Lord two thousand thirteen, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-eighth.

BARACK OBAMA

**Proclamation 8999 of July 25, 2013**

**Anniversary of the Americans With Disabilities Act, 2013**

*By the President of the United States of America*

*A Proclamation*

More than two centuries ago, our forebears began an unending journey to form a more perfect Union. Twenty-three years ago, we took a historic step down that path with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)—a landmark law that seeks to extend the promise of equal opportunity enshrined in our founding documents.

It promises equal access, from the classroom to the workplace to the transportation required to get there. It promises fairness, and the chance to live a full and independent life. It affords Americans with disabilities the protections they need to claim a future worthy of their talents.

Today, we celebrate the ADA’s lasting legacy as a pillar of civil rights. We also recognize that while the law continues to move America forward, our march to equality is not yet complete. Even now, barriers still keep too many people with disabilities from fully participating in our society and our workforce. Our country suffers when our citizens are denied the chance to strengthen our economy, support their families, and fully participate in our American life.

That is why my Administration is dedicated to leveling the playing field for Americans with disabilities. We are committed to making the Federal Government a model employer by recruiting, hiring, and retaining more workers with disabilities than at any time in our Nation’s history. In addition, we are working to connect people with disabilities to jobs in every part of our economy.

To get those jobs, students with disabilities need an education system that works for them. We must ensure lessons are inclusive, assessments are fair, and technology is accessible. We must rededicate ourselves to building supportive classrooms and putting an end to bullying that all too often targets young people with disabilities.

My Administration is bringing the same commitment to our health care system. The Affordable Care Act already made it illegal for insurers to deny coverage to children with disabilities because of pre-existing conditions, medical history, or genetic information. On January 1, 2014, the same will be true for all Americans. Alongside those protections, we have strengthened Medicare and Medicaid and ramped up programs to encourage community living and supportive services.

Together, we have come a long way toward ensuring equal opportunity for all. On this anniversary, let us recommit to going the rest of the distance.