

the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 6912 of August 21, 1996

Women's Equality Day, 1996

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

Since America's earliest days, our citizens have engaged in a passionate struggle to create a Nation where all can enjoy the benefits of democracy in equal measure. In 1920, we took a great step toward that noble goal by declaring that the right to vote could not be denied on the basis of gender. This 76th anniversary of the adoption of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution gives us an opportunity to celebrate the advances made in empowering women to fully participate in the political, cultural, social, and economic life of our country.

At long last we are seeing the fruits of our efforts to establish a society made strong by its vast diversity—a place where women not only make gains in traditionally male fields, but also use their talents and perspectives to enlarge the scope of public life. The extraordinary success of our female athletes at the Centennial Olympic Games in Atlanta is one stirring example of this progress. Historically excluded from so many arenas, today's women are carrying a shining torch of hope for younger generations to follow.

Now the challenge is to keep the doors of opportunity open and to build on the changes begun by the ratification of the 19th Amendment. We must continue to encourage women to pursue elected office and to contribute to the civil discourse. Every American stands to gain when women and men of all backgrounds participate in the political process and exercise their right to vote. This is a right that we must never take for granted— and a responsibility we must never shirk—because it gives each of us a voice in our national debate and calls every citizen to join in the pursuit of our Nation's fundamental ideals.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim August 26, 1996, as Women's Equality Day. I call upon all Americans to reflect on both the struggles and accomplishments of all women and to promote the observance of this day with appropriate programs and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-first day of August, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 6913 of August 23, 1996

Minority Enterprise Development Week, 1996

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

As our Nation continues to surge forward in the competitive arena of international business, minority entrepreneurs are playing an increasingly important role. In the new global economy, minority-owned businesses represent a unique advantage for the United States; the diversity of our national business community is one of its main strengths. Behind this success lies the daily work of thousands of minority business men and women who are continuing to renew the validity of the American Dream. Moreover, they are showing that the Dream is strongest when all can participate.

These Americans have stepped forward to accept several challenges: the challenge of opening economic participation to all citizens; the challenge of overcoming the under-representation of minorities in business ownership and management; and the challenge of creating jobs in the communities where they are needed most. These minority entrepreneurs entered the marketplace with no guarantees of success, and their achievements have helped level the playing field for others who wish to follow in their footsteps.

Minority business leaders contribute to our country's cultural and social heritage as well as to its economic health. As business pioneers, they are valuable role models to our youth, living heroes whose hard work and self-empowerment are strong examples for others to follow. These are the people whose work we celebrate during this 14th annual observance of Minority Enterprise Development Week. This year's observance is particularly poignant. It comes just months after our Nation lost Commerce Secretary Ron Brown and a group of talented and dedicated Federal employees and American business people in a tragic plane crash during a trade mission to open commercial opportunities for American businesses in Bosnia.

Ron Brown worked hard to include minority business interests in our Nation's business and economic development policies, and as we carry forward his legacy, it is our responsibility to ensure that all Americans can see business ownership as more than just a dream. Our future as a world economic power rests on the notion that business ownership can be attained by anyone willing to work toward that goal. Minority Enterprise Development Week is a time to spotlight the minority men and women who provide the goods, services, and jobs that keep this Nation strong. These Americans support their communities and inspire future generations. They are confident and competent people whose commercial accomplishments show them to be equal to any fair competition, whether here or abroad.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim September 22 through September 28, 1996, as Minority Enterprise Development Week. I call on all citizens to commemorate this week with appropriate ceremonies and activities, joining together to recognize the contributions that minority entrepreneurs make to our Nation's economy.