

Proclamation 7017 of August 19, 1997

Women's Equality Day, 1997

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

Each year, on Women's Equality Day, we reflect on how far we have traveled on our journey to make America live up to the ideals of justice and equality articulated so powerfully in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. Few constitutional amendments have affected that progress more profoundly than the 19th, which guarantees American women the right to vote.

Looking back from today's vantage point, where women hold positions of authority and responsibility at almost every level of government, it is hard to imagine that, for almost a century and a half, women were barred from exercising the most fundamental right of every democracy. There are women still living among us who can remember a time when they were prevented, by law, from having a role in shaping the destiny of their country and the impact of government on their own and their families' lives. But thanks to women and men of extraordinary courage and conviction, who waged for years a determined campaign for women's suffrage, the 19th Amendment was ratified in August of 1920 and opened the door for generations of American women to add their vision and voices to our national discourse.

This year, we mark another milestone in the life of our democracy: the 25th anniversary of the enactment of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Title IX, building on the spirit of the 19th Amendment, prohibits discrimination against women in education and sports programs. For a quarter-century, it has enabled American girls and women to make the most of their abilities, to dream big dreams, and, more important, to achieve those dreams. In large measure, because of the 19th Amendment and Title IX, our Nation has reaped the rewards of women's talents, accomplishments, wisdom, and perspective. In every activity and profession, in the home and outside—as astronauts and professional athletes, as teachers and university presidents, as farmers and firefighters, as caregivers, Cabinet members, and Supreme Court Justices—women have made lasting contributions to the quality of our lives and the strength of our democracy.

Today, as Americans engage in a serious and profoundly important dialogue on the future of our multiracial, multiethnic, multicultural society, we do well to remember that we are all immeasurably enriched when we choose the path of inclusion and empowerment. Women's Equality Day and the anniversary of Title IX remind us that by demanding an equal opportunity for every American, we ensure a brighter future for all Americans.

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, 1997, as Women's Equality Day. I call upon the citizens of our great Nation to observe this day with appropriate programs and activities.

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

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 7018 of September 8, 1997

America Goes Back to School, 1997

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

Americans want the best for our children. We want them to live out their dreams, empowered with the tools they need to make the most of their lives and to build a future where America remains the world's beacon of hope and freedom and opportunity. To do this, we must all make improving the quality of education in America one of our highest priorities.

In my State of the Union Address earlier this year, I issued a call to action for American education to prepare our Nation for the 21st century. Working together, we must make our schools strong and safe, with clear standards of achievement and discipline and talented, dedicated teachers in every classroom. Every school and every State should adopt rigorous national standards, with national tests in 4th-grade reading and 8th-grade math to make sure our children master the basics. We must ensure that every student can read independently and well by the end of the 3rd grade. We must connect every classroom and library to the Internet by the year 2000 and help all students become technologically literate. We must modernize school buildings and expand school choice and accountability in public education. And we must encourage lifelong learning for all our citizens, from expanding Head Start programs to helping adults improve their education and skills.

These goals are ambitious, but they are crucial if we are to prepare for the challenges and possibilities of life in the 21st century. With the 1997 balanced budget agreement, we will begin to meet these goals by providing new resources to help children learn to read, the means to help connect every school to the Internet, and tens of billions of dollars in tax cuts to help families pay for college.

I urge all Americans to become actively involved in their local schools and colleges and to make a real commitment to support education improvement and give our children the kind of support they need to succeed. The Partnership for Family Involvement in Education is setting a powerful example in this endeavor. These partners—including the Department of Education and more than 3,000 schools, families, colleges and universities, community, cultural, and religious groups, businesses, elected officials and policy-makers, and the men and women of our Armed Forces—have pledged their support for our initiative, “America Goes Back to School: Answering the President’s Call to Action.” Through their dedication to our children, they are helping America’s young people grow into responsible and productive