

Among all these ranks of brave Americans, our living former prisoners of war form a living testament to the courage Americans have shown in defending liberty. During World War II and the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam, prisoners endured, in addition to separation from their loved ones, isolation, disease, and torture. More recently, American troops in the Persian Gulf stood bravely in the face of enemy capture and returned home with honor.

The men and women who suffered through the atrocious conditions of internment deserve our utmost gratitude and respect. Their fortitude serves as an example of placing the ideals of freedom and self-government above one's own interests. We also owe a debt of gratitude to their families for weathering agonizing uncertainty while demonstrating support for their loved ones' service to country.

In World War II, patriotic Americans stepped forward without hesitation to carry America's honor into unknown battlefields. Many thousands gave their lives as the ultimate sacrifice, both on the battlefield and in the deadly prison camps of the Pacific and Europe.

We are particularly mindful this month of anniversaries reminding us of the contributions former prisoners of war have made to our freedom. April marks the anniversary of the first return of American POWs from North Korea during Operation Little Switch. These prisoners endured bitter cold and inadequate food, clothing, and medical care in their brave effort to stop the spread of communism.

This April is also the 28th anniversary of the end of Operation Homecoming, in which our Vietnam-era POWs returned to freedom. Americans held prisoner during that war, some for as long as 9 years, were subject to torture and the horrors of isolation. They survived only through their faith, character, and patriotism.

On this date, we remember the sacrifices of those imprisoned while serving America. We remain committed to ensuring that future generations know of their heroism in order to fully appreciate their courage and resolve. Although they returned home safely, their physical and emotional scars remain as a reminder of the high price of liberty.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE W. BUSH, 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 April 9, 2001, as National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day. I call upon all the people of the United States to join me in remembering former American prisoners of war who suffered the hardships of enemy captivity. I also call upon Federal, State, and local government officials and private organizations to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this second day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand one, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fifth.

GEORGE W. BUSH

Proclamation 7422 of April 4, 2001**National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week, 2001**

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Organ and tissue transplantation is one of the most significant advances in medicine. Wonderful success stories give hope to people of all ages, and donors and their families deserve our deepest gratitude. Their extraordinary generosity and foresight have given countless individuals the opportunity to rear a family, hold a job, and pursue fuller and more active lives.

Unfortunately, many people are not able to reap the benefits of remarkable transplant technology. More than 75,000 Americans are on the national organ transplant waiting list, and every 13 minutes, another person will be added to the waiting list. Sadly, each day, 15 of those on the waiting list will die because the need for organs far exceeds the number donated.

The Department of Health and Human Services and health professionals across the country are dedicated to improving these statistics. By becoming organ donors, Americans can join in this important mission to help those suffering from a life-threatening illness caused by the failure of a vital organ. Persons can participate by simply completing and carrying a donor card and informing family and friends of their wish to donate. Such decisions will make a significant difference in the number of available organs for donation.

Many Americans have set a powerful example in this regard, agreeing to become an organ donor and taking a selfless action that may potentially save lives. I encourage other Americans to consider organ donation and to join me in expressing gratitude for those who have already made the gift of life.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE W. BUSH, 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 April 15 through 21, 2001, as National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week. I call upon medical professionals, government agencies, private organizations, and educators to join me in raising awareness of the need for organ donors in communities throughout our Nation.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this fourth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand one, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fifth.

GEORGE W. BUSH