

Religious Freedom Day celebrates the passage of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom on January 16, 1786. Thomas Jefferson, drafter of the legislation, considered it one of his three greatest accomplishments, along with writing the Declaration of Independence and founding the University of Virginia. Recognizing the importance of faith to our people, our Founding Fathers guaranteed religious freedom in the Constitution.

Protecting our religious freedom requires the vigilance of the American people and of government at all levels. Within my Administration, the Department of Justice is acting to protect religious freedom, including prosecuting those who attack people or places of worship because of religious affiliation. The Department of Education has issued new guidelines that allow students to engage in constitutionally protected religious activity in public schools. These guidelines protect, for example, students' rights to say a prayer before meals in the cafeteria, to gather with other students before school to pray, and to engage in other expressions of personal faith.

Through my Faith-Based and Community Initiative, my Administration continues to encourage the essential work of faith-based and community organizations. Governments can and should support effective social services, including those provided by religious people and organizations. When government gives that support, it is important that faith-based institutions not be forced to change their religious character. In December 2002, I signed an Executive Order to end discrimination against faith-based organizations in the Federal grants process. In September 2003, in implementing this order, my Administration eliminated many of the barriers that have kept faith-based charities from partnering with the Federal Government to help Americans in need. Six Federal agencies have proposed or finalized new regulations to ensure that no organization or beneficiary will be discriminated against in a Federally funded social service program on the basis of religion.

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 January 16, 2004, as Religious Freedom Day. I urge all Americans to reflect on the blessings of our religious freedom and to observe this day through appropriate events and activities in homes, schools, and places of worship.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this sixteenth day of January, in the year of our Lord two thousand four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

GEORGE W. BUSH

**Proclamation 7754 of February 2, 2004**

**American Heart Month, 2004**

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

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. It affects men and women of every age and race. During American Heart Month, we

encourage all Americans to join the fight against heart disease and to learn more about how to prevent it.

More than 64 million Americans suffer from one or more forms of cardiovascular disease, including high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, congestive heart failure, stroke, and congenital heart defects. Many of the risk factors that can lead to heart disease, such as high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, and diabetes, can be prevented or controlled. Research has shown that men and women who lead healthy lifestyles, including making healthy food choices, getting regular exercise, maintaining a healthy weight, and choosing not to smoke or drink excessively, can significantly decrease their risk of heart disease.

Heart disease is responsible for the deaths of one in three women in the United States. To make women more aware of the danger of heart disease, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health has joined with the Department of Health and Human Services and other national organizations to launch a nationwide campaign called "The Heart Truth." This important campaign encourages women to learn more about heart health, to lead healthier lives, and to talk with their doctors about their risk for developing heart disease.

During American Heart Month, I urge all Americans to learn more about heart health and to reduce their risk factors for serious heart conditions. By making healthy choices, we can live longer and better lives.

In recognition of the important ongoing fight against heart disease, the Congress, by Joint Resolution approved December 30, 1963, as amended (77 Stat. 843; 36 U.S.C. 101), has requested that the President issue an annual proclamation designating February as "American Heart Month."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE W. BUSH, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim February 2004 as American Heart Month. I invite the Governors of the States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, officials of other areas subject to the jurisdiction of the United States, and the American people to join me in reaffirming our commitment to combating heart disease.

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

GEORGE W. BUSH

#### **Proclamation 7755 of February 2, 2004**

### **National Consumer Protection Week, 2004**

*By the President of the United States of America*

*A Proclamation*

Every day, America's consumers conduct millions of financial transactions. During National Consumer Protection Week, we recognize those who help to safeguard our citizens from consumer fraud, and we encourage all Americans to be informed consumers. This year's theme, "Financial Literacy: