

Proclamation 6165 of August 6, 1990**Voting Rights Celebration Day, 1990**

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

When the Voting Rights Act was signed into law a quarter of a century ago, our Nation took an important step toward fulfilling its promise of liberty, justice, and opportunity for all. Through this historic act, the Congress guaranteed the enforcement of the 15th Amendment to our Constitution—an Amendment that had been ratified almost a century earlier.

Ratified on February 3, 1870, shortly after the end of the Civil War, the 15th Amendment guarantees that the "right of citizens to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." Despite the adoption of this Amendment, for the next 95 years many black Americans and others continued to be denied their right to vote through discriminatory laws and practices. For example, literacy tests required by some State and local governments deterred many blacks from voting or registering to vote. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was designed to enforce the guarantees of the 15th Amendment by prohibiting such discriminatory tactics.

Signing the Voting Rights Act into law, President Johnson observed that "freedom and justice and the dignity of man are not just words to us. We believe in them. Under all the growth and the tumult and abundance, we believe. And so, as long as some among us are oppressed—and we are part of that oppression—it must blunt our faith and sap the strength of our high purpose." Because America's promise of liberty and equal opportunity for all is not an empty one, the adoption of the Voting Rights Act marked an important victory not only for black Americans, but also for our entire Nation.

President Johnson also observed that the Voting Rights Act brought "an important instrument of freedom" into the hands of millions of our citizens. "But that instrument must be used," he noted. It was a firm yet gentle reminder that all Americans would do well to heed today.

Millions of people around the world have struggled to gain the right to vote, a right that is at the heart of freedom and self-government. Many have died for it. We must not fail to be inspired by their sacrifice, and we must never underestimate the importance of a single vote. Every American who is old enough to vote should register to do so. He or she should strive to become more fully informed about issues and candidates and faithfully exercise his or her right to participate in the electoral process. By employing the "instrument of freedom" protected by the Constitution and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, each of us can help build a brighter future for ourselves and for generations yet unborn.

In commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Congress, by House Joint Resolution 625, has designated August 6, 1990, as "Voting Rights Celebration Day" and has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this day.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE BUSH, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim August 6, 1990, as Voting Rights Celebration Day. On this occasion, as we commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, let us reflect upon the importance of exercising our right to vote and renew our determination to uphold America's promise of equal opportunity for all.

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

GEORGE BUSH

Proclamation 6166 of August 6, 1990

National Neighborhood Crime Watch Day, 1990

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Our Nation's law enforcement officials have accepted a great responsibility, one that often entails considerable personal risks and sacrifices. By cooperating with law enforcement personnel in their efforts to fulfill that responsibility, participants in Neighborhood Watch programs are demonstrating the kind of personal responsibility and moral resolve that all Americans must emulate if we are to win the war on drug trafficking and other crime.

Neighborhood Watch programs provide an effective means for concerned citizens to assist law enforcement officials in preventing crime and apprehending its perpetrators. Participants in Neighborhood Watch programs remain vigilant against crime in their communities and notify the police when they observe any suspicious activity. They clean up their local parks and declare them off-limits to gangs and drug dealers. They also keep watch over elderly individuals and other members of their communities who might easily become victims of theft or violence, and they organize special clubs where young people can find wholesome alternatives to delinquency and drug use.

Through their efforts to cooperate with the police and with one another, Americans across the country are reclaiming the safety of their streets and neighborhoods. Individuals of all ages, business leaders, educators, members of the criminal justice system, and elected officials at each level of government have shown that—working together—we can make every community a place where law-abiding citizens are able to live and work, free from fear and danger.

On Tuesday, August 7, 1990, millions of Americans will demonstrate their determination to prevent drug trafficking and other crime by taking part in a "National Night Out." Sponsored by the National Association of Town Watch, this event is designed to strengthen police-community cooperation and increase participation in local crime and drug abuse prevention efforts. During the "National Night Out" as an expression of their resolve to defend the safety of their homes and neighborhoods, concerned citizens will participate in special marches, can-