

Public Law 102-189
102d Congress

Joint Resolution

Dec. 4, 1991
[H.J. Res. 201]

Designating the week beginning December 1, 1991, and the week beginning November 15, 1992, each as "Geography Awareness Week".

Whereas geography is the study of people and their planet, offering a framework for understanding ourselves, our interdependence with other peoples, our relationship to the Earth, and world events;

Whereas the United States has both worldwide involvements and influence that demand an understanding of geography, different cultures, and foreign languages;

Whereas the credibility of our Nation's foreign policy largely depends on the support of a geographically informed public, a public which understands both the locations and the significance of historic changes occurring around the globe and their impact on the United States;

Whereas an ignorance of geography, different cultures, and foreign languages places the United States at a disadvantage with respect to other nations in matters of business, politics, the environment, and global events;

Whereas, although geography as a distinct discipline has virtually disappeared from the curricula of schools in the United States, it is still being taught as a basic subject in other nations, including the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, and the Soviet Union;

Whereas our Nation's Governors, in their National Goals for Education, explicitly identified geography as one of five subjects in which American students should demonstrate competency;

Whereas a perspective in geography offers a critically needed understanding of the relationship between human activity and the condition of our planet in this time of increasing environmental problems;

Whereas the first federally funded National Assessment of Educational Progress revealed a "disturbing geography knowledge gap" among 12th graders: 58 percent could locate Jerusalem on a regional map, but only 36 percent knew that Saudi Arabia is bounded by the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf;

Whereas in a 1988 Gallup Poll, 75 percent of those surveyed could not locate the Persian Gulf on a map, and fewer than half of those surveyed could name Asia as the place that Christopher Columbus was hoping to reach when he discovered the New World;

Whereas that 1988 Gallup Poll also projected that 24,000,000 Americans could not identify the United States on a map of the world, 58,000,000 Americans could not tell direction on a map, and 105,000,000 Americans did not know the population of the United States;

Whereas geography is more than the study of map identification, State capitals, and country names, but geography also gives meaning to location and establishes a context for understanding the connections among peoples, places, and events;

Whereas the success of a democracy relies heavily upon an educated citizenry whose members are aware of both their influence on and connection with the rest of the world; and

Whereas national attention must be focused on the integral role that a knowledge of world geography plays in preparing citizens of the United States to assume a responsible role in the future of an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the week beginning December 1, 1991, and the week beginning November 15, 1992, are each designated as "Geography Awareness Week", and the President is authorized and requested to issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to observe such week with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

Approved December 4, 1991.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—H.J. Res. 201:

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 137 (1991):

Nov. 22, considered and passed House.

Nov. 26, considered and passed Senate.