

Proclamation 6912 of August 21, 1996

Women's Equality Day, 1996

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Since America's earliest days, our citizens have engaged in a passionate struggle to create a Nation where all can enjoy the benefits of democracy in equal measure. In 1920, we took a great step toward that noble goal by declaring that the right to vote could not be denied on the basis of gender. This 76th anniversary of the adoption of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution gives us an opportunity to celebrate the advances made in empowering women to fully participate in the political, cultural, social, and economic life of our country.

At long last we are seeing the fruits of our efforts to establish a society made strong by its vast diversity—a place where women not only make gains in traditionally male fields, but also use their talents and perspectives to enlarge the scope of public life. The extraordinary success of our female athletes at the Centennial Olympic Games in Atlanta is one stirring example of this progress. Historically excluded from so many arenas, today's women are carrying a shining torch of hope for younger generations to follow.

Now the challenge is to keep the doors of opportunity open and to build on the changes begun by the ratification of the 19th Amendment. We must continue to encourage women to pursue elected office and to contribute to the civil discourse. Every American stands to gain when women and men of all backgrounds participate in the political process and exercise their right to vote. This is a right that we must never take for granted—and a responsibility we must never shirk—because it gives each of us a voice in our national debate and calls every citizen to join in the pursuit of our Nation's fundamental ideals.

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, 1996, as Women's Equality Day. I call upon all Americans to reflect on both the struggles and accomplishments of all women and to promote the observance of this day with appropriate programs and activities.

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

WILLIAM J. CLINTON