

and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 7039 of October 10, 1997

Columbus Day, 1997

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

The life and achievements of Christopher Columbus demonstrate how powerful and lasting an influence one individual can have on the course of human history. Although great explorers reached the shores of this continent both before and after Columbus, few have captured the American imagination as he has. Perhaps because we have always been an adventurous people, eager for challenge and change, we feel a special affinity for this extraordinary man who left the safety of known waters to pursue his vision across the ocean to the threshold of a new world.

Although his momentous voyages across the Atlantic took place more than 500 years ago, their impact can still be felt today. Columbus' discoveries in the West Indies brought about substantive and continuing contact between the peoples of the Old World and the New, contact that gave rise to misunderstandings and conflicts that we still seek to reconcile today. He also made possible the exploration and settlement of North America and opened the door to our continent for generations to follow—people of every race and culture and ethnic origin, who have given our Nation its rich and unique diversity. Christopher Columbus, a son of Italy whose bold enterprise was made possible by the Spanish crown, holds a special place in the hearts of Americans of Italian and Spanish heritage. But, as we prepare for our own voyage of discovery into the next millennium, all Americans can draw inspiration from the character and accomplishments of Columbus. With vision, courage, imagination, and optimism, we can create a future bright with promise and a new world where all of us can pursue our dreams.

In recognition of the enduring achievements of Christopher Columbus, the Congress, by joint resolution of April 30, 1934 [48 Stat. 657], and an Act of June 28, 1968 (82 Stat. 250), has requested the President to proclaim the second Monday in October of each year as "Columbus Day."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim October 13, 1997, as Columbus Day. I call upon the people of the United States to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities. I also direct that the flag of the United States be displayed on all public buildings on the appointed day in honor of Christopher Columbus.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this tenth day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven,

and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 7040 of October 10, 1997

National Children's Day, 1997

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

With the birth of every child, the world becomes new again. Within each new infant lies enormous potential—potential for loving, for learning, and for making life better for others. But this potential must be nurtured. Just as seeds need fertile soil, warm sunshine, and gentle rain to grow, so do our children need a caring environment, the security of knowing they are loved, and the encouragement and opportunity to make the most of their God-given talents. There is no more urgent task before us, as a people and as a Nation, than creating such an environment for America's children.

One of the surest ways to do so is to strengthen American families and help parents in their efforts to raise healthy, happy children. My Administration has worked hard to give parents the tools they need to fulfill their crucial responsibilities. We have sought to put tobacco and guns out of the reach of children. We are improving the quality of our children's schools by making a national commitment to high academic and teaching standards. Recognizing the importance of a child's early years to his or her development, we have expanded Head Start and established Early Head Start for low-income families with children 3 years old or younger. We have made it easier for millions of parents to take time off to be with a sick child without losing their jobs, and to keep their health insurance when they change jobs. We have protected Medicaid coverage for 36 million Americans, including about 20 million children, and the Balanced Budget Act I recently signed into law will provide meaningful health care coverage to millions more uninsured children.

But there is still much to be accomplished if we are to ensure that America's children grow up to meet their fullest potential. Our next important goal must be to build upon our efforts and improve the quality and affordability of child care in our Nation. With more people in the work force, with more single-parent homes, and with more families in which both parents have to work to make ends meet, millions of American children are already in some form of day care, and the demand for affordable, quality child care is growing. Later this month, the First Lady and I will host the White House Conference on Child Care to work with and learn from other parents, child care providers and experts, business leaders, and economists. Together we will focus on the best means to increase the quality, availability, and affordability of child care in our Nation.

As we observe National Children's Day this year, let us recommit ourselves to creating a society where parents can raise healthy, happy children; where every newborn is cherished, where every child is en-