Proclamation 7260 of December 13, 1999

Bicentennial Commemoration of the Death of George Washington

By the President of the United States of America
A Proclamation

Few individuals in history have had a more profound and lasting effect on a nation and its people than has George Washington. His character, convictions, and vision shaped our Republic in its crucial formative years and started us on the great American journey that continues to this day.

At every moment of challenge or peril in the early history of our Nation, George Washington emerged as a leader of uncommon wisdom and steadfast dedication to the ideals of service. A brilliant warrior, he held together a small, undisciplined army with the force of his personality and the trust he inspired in his men, ultimately leading them to victory in the American Revolution. When the Constitutional Convention began in Philadelphia in 1787, the delegates turned to George Washington to lead their efforts to create a Constitution for the American people. Elected unanimously to preside over the Convention, Washington helped to craft the blueprint for our democracy that has inspired freedom-loving peoples across the globe for more than 2 centuries.

As the first President of the United States, George Washington used his power wisely and with restraint, recognizing that his actions would set enduring precedents and traditions for the leaders who would follow him. He set a steady course for our fledgling Nation, keeping us free from entanglement in foreign conflicts, laying the foundations for financial stability and economic prosperity, maintaining a strong defense to preserve our independence and security, and ensuring above all the protection of Americans' rights and freedoms. And, in relinquishing his office at the appointed time, he established by example the peaceful transition of power that has become the hallmark of our democracy.

Near midnight on December 14, 1799, America's great warrior, statesman, and leader took his final breath. His last words were, "'Tis well." Due in large part to the early guiding hand of George Washington, it has been well for our Nation ever since. Now, 200 years later, as America continues its journey into a new century, it is fitting that we acknowledge our enduring debt to this great man.

The Congress, by Senate Concurrent Resolution 83, has requested the President to proclaim December 14, 1999, as a day to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the death of George Washington.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, by the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and laws of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim December 14, 1999, as the Bicentennial Commemoration of the Death of George Washington. I call upon the people of the United States to mark this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities, paying tribute to the life and achievements of George Washington and his contributions to our Nation. As a further mark of respect, I hereby order that the flag of the United States shall be flown at half-staff upon all public buildings and grounds, at all mili-
tary posts and naval stations, and on all naval vessels of the Federal
Government in the District of Columbia and throughout the United
States and its Territories and possessions on Tuesday, December 14,
1999. I also direct that the flag shall be flown at half-staff on that day
at all United States embassies, legations, consular offices, and other fa-
cilities abroad, including all military facilities and naval vessels and
stations.

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

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 7261 of December 16, 1999

55th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge

By the President of the United States of America
A Proclamation

By the winter of 1944, the United States and our Allies had turned the
tide of the Second World War. Allied forces had liberated the Italian
peninsula and were gaining ground in France and the Low Countries.
In mid-December, in a desperate attempt to halt this steady advance,
Adolf Hitler launched a furious and massive counteroffensive. On De-
cember 16, 29 German divisions flooded the Allied line in the
Ardennes Forest region of Belgium and Luxembourg. The Battle of the
Bulge had begun.

Facing superior enemy numbers, rugged terrain, and bitter weather, the
American troops at first fell back. But their determination to defeat the
Nazis never wavered. For 6 weeks, U.S. soldiers responded to fierce
German offensives with equally determined counterattacks, refusing to
succumb to the Nazi onslaught. The siege of Bastogne in Belgium re-
mains an enduring symbol of their indomitable spirit. At that strategic
crossroads, a small detachment of the 101st Airborne Division and
other attached troops were encircled. When called upon to surrender
by the much larger German force, Brigadier General Anthony
McAuliffe dismissed the demand with his legendary one-word reply:
"Nuts." Against all odds, he and his men held firm during the siege
until reinforcements arrived and helped halt the German offensive at
a critical point in the Battle.

Inevitably, the spirit, toughness, valor, and resolve of the U.S. forces
led to victory. By late January of 1945, the American and Allied coun-
terattack had succeeded in pushing back the Nazi forces, eliminating
the threat of further German offensives and ultimately sealing the fate
of the Nazi regime. But this victory was costly. At the end of the Battle
of the Bulge, some 19,000 Americans lay dead, and thousands more
were wounded, captured, or missing in action.

Now, more than half a century later, we still stand in awe of the cour-
dage and sacrifice of the more than 600,000 U.S. soldiers and airmen
who fought that epic battle. These seemingly ordinary Americans
achieved extraordinary things. Leaving their homes, their families, and