



Law Day, U.S.A., 1989

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

For more than 30 years, our Nation has paused each May 1 to observe Law Day, U.S.A. On this day, we celebrate America's legacy of liberty and self-government, guaranteed under law and preserved with the aid of our legal system.

The American legal system plays a vital role in maintaining the balance between individual freedom and civil order. Our Nation's leaders, past and present, have supplemented our rich common law heritage with statutes, rules, and regulations at every level of government. This body of laws not only provides protection for the freedoms guaranteed by our Constitution, it also provides a framework for peacefully resolving disputes, vindicating the rights of individuals, and punishing criminal conduct.

Our Nation has long been committed to ensuring that this system serves all who seek redress of their grievances. That commitment is reflected in the solemn oath taken by all Federal judges before they assume office: the vow to "administer justice without respect to persons, and do equal right to the poor and to the rich." Under that oath, judges must decide every citizen's claim on its merits, not on the basis of the claimant's status.

Despite its many accomplishments, however, our legal system still exhibits a number of imperfections. There remain members of our society for whom the promise of redress for their grievances has not yet been fully realized. Delay in court proceedings and the cost of pursuing legal remedies make it difficult for many Americans to have their claims adjudicated, regardless of their economic means. Others face large hurdles and tremendous frustration—even if they ultimately obtain vindication—because of the frivolous use of legal processes. These problems are particularly distressing to the poor. Many indigent persons are simply precluded from pursuing legal remedies to their grievances. All too often, this exclusion invites disrespect for our judicial system and subsequently undermines the strength of our democracy.

On this Law Day, which is dedicated to the theme of "Access to Justice," we remind ourselves that it is everyone's responsibility to ensure the effectiveness and accessibility of the American justice system. Our Founders asserted that the second goal of the U.S. Constitution was "to establish justice." Because of the central role of the rule of law in preserving our freedom in this constitutional democracy, all Americans should concern themselves with improving the Nation's justice system. All of us can participate in this process by developing a better understanding of its purpose and operations. We can encourage the organizations to which we belong to initiate educational programs aimed at the general public, and we can give of our own time to help those with valid claims to obtain redress.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE BUSH, President of the United States of America, in accordance with Public Law 87-20 of April 7, 1961, do hereby proclaim Monday, May 1, 1989, as Law Day, U.S.A. I urge the people of the United States to mark this occasion by reflecting upon the importance of the justice system to the preservation of our democracy, as well as the importance of access to that system for all who will make responsible use of it. I urge the legal profession, schools, libraries, government agencies, the media, clergy, and businesses, as well as civic and voluntary service organizations, to join in efforts to focus public attention on the importance of making access to justice a reality for all persons. I also call upon all public officials to display the flag of the United States on all government buildings on this day.

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

George Bush