

This year, we can take one more historic step to ensure that victims throughout our country are guaranteed the fundamental rights to be present at proceedings, to be informed of significant developments in their cases and of their rights, and to be heard at sentencing and other appropriate times throughout the criminal justice process. The Congress should pass a Victims' Rights Amendment to the United States Constitution that will, when ratified by the States, ensure that crime victims are at the center of the criminal justice process, not on the outside looking in.

We must stand united in caring for and assisting crime victims throughout our country.

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 April 13 through April 19, 1997, as National Crime Victims' Rights Week. I urge all Americans to follow in the example of victim advocates and reaffirm our common purpose to protect and comfort one another in times of hardship—not only during this special week but also throughout the year.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this fifteenth day of April, 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-first.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 6990 of April 17, 1997

Education and Sharing Day, U.S.A., 1997

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

A commitment to learning has been at the heart of America's progress for more than 200 years. Now, as we stand on the threshold of the 21st century, our continued success as a Nation depends on the quality of education that we provide to all our citizens.

American children must have all the tools they need to make the most of their God-given potential. We must help them harness the powerful forces of technology, so that every student, including those in the most isolated rural towns and those in the poorest inner-city schools, has access to the vast universe of knowledge available on the Internet.

However, education involves more than books, facts, and homework assignments. Education also concerns the building of character. Character is an anchor of our society, and we should work hard to cultivate it among our young people. If our Nation is to continue to thrive and prosper, we must continue to live up to our ideals.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, grasped these fundamental truths. Espousing the values of education, morality, and civic duty throughout his distinguished life, he understood that learning and the sharing of experiences are crucial to developing the skills that will

mold the character of each new generation. By striving to provide the best education possible, we can better prepare our Nation for the challenges that confront us as we move forward into the next century. The Rebbe rightly saw education as a continuous process of effort and experience, in which each person is nurtured from the cradle throughout life, bringing out the best in all of us.

I urge all Americans, on this day and throughout the year, to remember the teachings of the Rebbe, and to work in partnership with educators, administrators, community leaders, and parents to help our young people thrive and prosper.

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 April 18, 1997, as Education and Sharing Day, U.S.A. I call upon all Americans to observe this day with appropriate activities and programs.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this seventeenth day of April, 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-first.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 6991 of April 18, 1997

National Day of Prayer, 1997

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

America was born out of intense conflict as our forefathers fought the forces of oppression and tyranny. From our earliest history, Americans have always looked to God for strength and encouragement in those moments when darkness seemed to encroach from every side. Our people have always believed in the power of prayer and have called upon the name of the Lord through times of peace and war, hope and despair, prosperity and decline.

In his first inaugural address, during the rush of optimism that followed the Colonies' uplifting victory in the American Revolution, George Washington observed that "it would be peculiarly improper to omit, in this first official act my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe." Amid the bleak turmoil of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln conveyed similar sentiments by calling Americans to "a firm reliance on Him who has never yet forsaken this favored land." Almost a century later, Harry Truman emphasized the need for God's help in making decisions: "when we are striving to strengthen the foundation of peace and security we stand in special need of divine support."

Indeed, the familiar phrase "In God we trust," which has been our national motto for more than 40 years and which first appeared on our coinage during the Civil War, is a fitting testimony to the prayers offered up by American women and men through the centuries. Today within our Nation's