

Proclamation 7296 of April 21, 2000

Bicentennial of the Library of Congress

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The Library of Congress is truly America's library. Established on April 24, 1800, as the Congress prepared to transfer the Federal Government from Philadelphia to Washington, D.C., it is our country's oldest Federal cultural institution. With Thomas Jefferson's private library—acquired in 1815—as its core, the Library of Congress has reflected from its earliest days the breadth and variety of Jefferson's interests and his love of democracy, expanding the store of human knowledge, and helping ensure the free flow of ideas.

Two centuries later, the Library's collections remain diverse and expansive, containing materials on virtually every subject, in virtually every medium. The Library houses approximately 120 million items, including more than 18 million books and some of the world's largest collections of maps, manuscripts, photographs, prints, newspapers, sound recordings, motion pictures, and other research materials. The Library also offers wide-ranging services to the Government and the public, serving simultaneously as a legislative library and the major research arm of the United States Congress; the copyright agency of the United States; the world's largest law library; and a major center for preserving research materials and for digitizing documents, manuscripts, maps, motion pictures, and other specialized materials for use on the Internet.

Today, America's library is also the world's library. An international resource of unparalleled reach, the Library of Congress provides services through its 21 reading rooms in 3 buildings on Capitol Hill as well as electronically through its web site, which registers more than 4 million transactions each workday from people around the globe. With its remarkable collections and resources, the Library has truly fulfilled its stated mission to make “available and useful . . . and to sustain and preserve a universal collection of knowledge and creativity for future generations.”

Libraries have always enabled people, in the words of James Madison, to “arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives.” These words, inscribed at the entrance of the James Madison Memorial Building of the Library of Congress, are a tribute to the Library's past and a sustaining goal as it embarks on its third century.

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 24, 2000, as a time to commemorate the Bicentennial of the Library of Congress. I call upon the people of the United States to observe this occasion with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities that celebrate the many contributions the Library of Congress has made to strengthening our democracy and our national culture.

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

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 7297 of April 28, 2000

National Charter Schools Week, 2000

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Providing our children the high-quality education they need to succeed is one of the greatest challenges we face as a Nation, and helping communities establish public charter schools is one of the best ways we can meet that challenge.

Charter schools—public schools that are started by parents, educators, and communities working in partnership—are open to students of every background and ability. They also afford greater autonomy and flexibility in staffing decisions, curriculum design, and other areas than traditional public schools do. In return for this flexibility, charter schools must set and meet the highest standards, and they can remain open only as long as they do so.

These schools are helping us to meet many of our Nation's most important education goals. They are driving change in public schools across America by showing the benefits of greater parent participation, longer school years, higher academic standards, and character education. Charter schools offer reform, innovation, and increased choice in public education, and, by doing so, they spur improvement throughout our public school system.

I am proud that my Administration has taken a leadership role in promoting and funding public charter schools. When I took office almost 8 years ago, there was only one charter school in our Nation. By September of last year, that number had grown to more than 1,600 in 30 States and the District of Columbia, with more than 250,000 students enrolled and many more on waiting lists. Since 1994, the Federal Government has invested almost \$400 million in public charter schools. Last August, I announced the release of almost \$100 million in Department of Education grants to develop, open, or expand charter schools across the country. And my proposed budget for fiscal year 2001 includes \$175 million for the Department of Education's Public Charter Schools Program. These grants and funds will help cover the costs of opening new schools and help existing charter schools hire more well-trained teachers, buy more books, computers, and educational software, and ensure that classrooms are safe and accessible for all students. Finally, these funds will aid charter schools as they develop accountability systems to measure whether they are meeting or exceeding State standards.

During National Charter Schools Week, I commend the many dedicated parents, educators, students, and other concerned citizens who, working together, have started charter schools in their communities to meet the grow-