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Bicentennial Independence Day

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The Continental Congress by resolution adopted July 2, 1776, declared that thirteen American colonies were free and independent states. Two days later, on the fourth of July, the Congress adopted a Declaration of Independence which proclaimed to the world the birth of the United States of America.

In the two centuries that have passed, we have matured as a nation and as a people. We have gained the wisdom that age and experience bring, yet we have kept the strength and idealism of youth.

In this year of our Nation's Bicentennial, we enter our third century with the knowledge that we have achieved greatness as a nation and have contributed to the good of mankind. We face the future with renewed dedication to the principles embodied in our Declaration of Independence, and with renewed gratitude for those who pledged their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor to preserve individual liberty for us.

In recognition of the two hundredth anniversary of the great historic events of 1776, and in keeping with the wishes of the Congress, I ask that all Americans join in an extended period of celebration, thanksgiving and prayer on the second, third, fourth and fifth days of July of our Bicentennial year—so that people of all faiths, in their own way, may give thanks for the protection of divine Providence through 200 years, and pray for the future safety and happiness of our Nation.

To commemorate the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, the Congress, by concurrent resolution adopted June 26, 1963 (77 Stat. 944), declared that its anniversary be observed by the ringing of bells throughout the United States.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GERALD R. FORD, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim that the two hundredth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence be observed by the simultaneous ringing of bells throughout the United States at the hour of two o'clock, eastern daylight time, on the afternoon of the Fourth of July, 1976, our Bicentennial Independence Day, for a period of two minutes, signifying our two centuries of independence.

I call upon civic, religious, and other community leaders to encourage public participation in this historic observance. I call upon all Americans, here and abroad, including all United States flag ships at sea, to join in this salute.

As the bells ring in our third century, as millions of free men and women pray, let every American resolve that this Nation, under God, will meet the future with the same courage and dedication Americans showed the world two centuries ago. In perpetuation of the joyous ringing of the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia, let us again "Proclaim Liberty throughout all the Land unto all the Inhabitants thereof."

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-ninth day of June in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred seventy-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundredth.

Gerald R. Ford