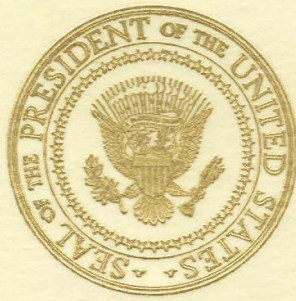


**The original documents are located in Box 34, folder “Bill of Rights Day/Human Rights Day and Week” of the William J. Baroody Files at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

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## Bill of Rights Day Human Rights Day and Week

*By the President of the United States of America*

### A Proclamation

Two hundred years ago, in September 1774, the First Continental Congress assembled in Carpenters' Hall, in Philadelphia, and set in motion a course of human events which created the United States. The system of government begun there, and the high principles on which it rests, continues today as the source of vitality for our society.

Anticipating the bicentennial of this Nation's independence, now is an excellent time to pause and consider the groundwork the delegates to Philadelphia laid for our independence. The First Continental Congress adopted a resolution asserting, among other things, the rights of the American people to life, liberty, and property; to participation in the legislative councils of government; to the heritage of the common law; to trial by jury; and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances. This resolution foreshadowed the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights.

It is altogether fitting to mark the 200th anniversary of this noble beginning of the Continental Congress. Beyond that, it is imperative that all of us study and cherish the ideas and ideals which bore fruit in the great constitutional documents of our country. At the same time, we should take the opportunity, whenever possible, to strengthen the liberties which have been assured us in the Bill of Rights, ratified one hundred and eighty-three years ago this week, on December 15, 1791.

America's concern with human rights is not something that ends at our borders. Benjamin Franklin wrote to a friend in 1789:

"God grant, that not only the Love of Liberty, but a thorough Knowledge of the Rights of Man, may pervade all the Nations of the Earth, so that a Philosopher may set his Foot anywhere on its Surface, and say, 'This is my Country'."

Franklin's spirit of universality has found rich modern expression in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The link between it and our Bill of Rights is clear. On December 10, we celebrate the twenty-sixth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. The General Assembly said that the Universal Declaration stands as "a common standard of achievement for all peoples and nations," reminding us that "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GERALD R. FORD, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim December 10, 1974, as Human Rights Day and December 15, 1974, as Bill of Rights Day. I call upon the people of the United States to observe the week beginning December 10, 1974, as Human Rights Week. Further, I ask all Americans to reflect deeply on the values inherent in the Bill of Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and draw on those values to promote peace, justice, and civility at home and around the world.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this third day of December, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred seventy-four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred ninety-ninth.

*Gerald R. Ford*





## Bill of Rights Day Human Rights Day and Week, 1975

*By the President of the United States of America*

### A Proclamation

As the United States of America looks forward to the two hundredth anniversary of our Nation's independence next July, it is appropriate that we pause and reflect on the principles of self-government that underlie our society and continue to nourish it.

Embodied in our great national documents—the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights—are the imperishable ideas that all men are created equal, that they are endowed with unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and that it is the people of the United States themselves who have ordained and established the government which serves us all.

The Founding Fathers could not foresee in detail the threats to liberty that might arise as the Republic grew, but they had the wisdom to know that threats would appear and that the people must be protected against them. When the new Constitution was being discussed in 1787, Thomas Jefferson complained in a letter to James Madison of the absence of a Bill of Rights, saying: "Let me add that a bill of rights is what the people are entitled to against every government on earth, general or particular; and what no just government should refuse, or rest on inferences."

Madison became convinced of the need for a Bill of Rights and wrote Jefferson: "The political truths declared in that solemn manner acquire by degrees the character of fundamental maxims of free government, and as they become incorporated with the National sentiment, counteract the impulses of interest and passion." In the First Congress, Madison, the principal proponent of those amendments to the Constitution known as the Bill of Rights, defended them in these words: "If they are incorporated into the constitution, independent tribunals of justice will consider themselves in a peculiar manner the guardian of those rights; they will be an impenetrable bulwark against every assumption of power in the legislative or executive. . . ."

This has truly been our national experience. So also in the international community have we come to respect and rely on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a fundamental statement of principles reaffirming faith in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

On December 15 we mark the one hundred eighty-fourth anniversary of the adoption of the Bill of Rights and on December 10 we observe the twenty-seventh anniversary of the Universal Declaration. It is fitting that in 1975, which is International Women's Year, we should recognize especially the contributions of women to political and social progress and underline our commitment to remove promptly such barriers that still remain in the way of their full participation in our Nation's life.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GERALD R. FORD, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim December 10, 1975, as Human Rights Day and December 15, 1975, as Bill of Rights Day. I call upon the American people to observe the week beginning December 10, 1975, as Human Rights Week. Further, I urge all Americans during the coming bicentennial year to contemplate the principles of liberty and justice enunciated in the Bill of Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to draw on them as the best means to assure our Nation's continued progress.

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

*Gerald R. Ford*





## Bill of Rights Day Human Rights Day and Week, 1976

*By the President of the United States of America*

### A Proclamation

We Americans have been deeply moved by the sights and sounds of our Bicentennial observance, celebrated this year with pageantry, with fireworks, and with tall ships whose friendly visits have reminded us of our close ties, both contemporary and historical, with many nations around the globe. More importantly, we have given renewed thought to those principles of liberty and justice that underlie our national experience. Reexamined in the light of the past two centuries, the great instruments of our freedom—the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights—retain both their vitality and their relevance to today's problems.

When he introduced his proposal for a Bill of Rights to the House of Representatives of the First Congress, James Madison called it "the great work." He said: "It will be a desirable thing to extinguish from the bosom of every member of the community, any apprehensions that there are those among his countrymen who wish to deprive them of the liberty for which they valiantly fought and honorably bled."

Madison argued that "the great object in view is to limit and qualify the powers of Government, by excepting out of the grant of power those cases in which the Government ought not to act, or to act only in a particular mode." Those cases include rights and freedoms all Americans cherish today—freedom of religion, of speech, of the press; security against unreasonable searches and seizures; freedom from self-incrimination; the guarantee of due process of law; trial by jury.

Our national commitment to the principles of the Bill of Rights is echoed in the community of nations by our respect for the ideals enunciated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. This Declaration eloquently affirms that the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world lies in the recognition of the inherent dignity, and the equal and inalienable rights, of all members of the human family.

In December we pay special tribute to these fundamental documents. December 15 is the one hundred and eighty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Bill of Rights and December 10 is the twenty-eighth anniversary of the Universal Declaration. As we enter the third century of our national existence we need more than ever to remember that the principles contained in these fundamental statements of human purpose have immediate application, not only domestically in our dealings with one another, but also internationally in our pursuit of friendly relations with all countries.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GERALD R. FORD, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim December 10, 1976, as Human Rights Day and December 15, 1976, as Bill of Rights Day. I call upon the American people to observe the week beginning December 10, 1976, as Human Rights Week. Further, I ask all Americans, as they reflect with conscious pride on our history, not to be content with past accomplishments but to recognize the future task of our Nation and mankind: to bring about the full realization of the ideals and aspirations expressed in the Bill of Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

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

*Gerald R. Ford*