

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SEPTEMBER 1, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

WHITE CANE SAFETY DAY, 1976

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

One of the basic rights which we as Americans cherish is the freedom of each citizen to move, without barriers, about this great land. For visually handicapped Americans, the white cane is both an instrument and symbol of independence, permitting a degree of mobility not otherwise possible.

A pathfinder, not a crutch, the white cane serves blind people as a sensitive transmitter of information. It signals the presence of obstacles and of changes in contour. It reassures by indicating the familiar as well as warning of the unexpected. To its user, the white cane provides the confidence to venture forth, to experience the world, and to participate fully in life.

The white cane also serves to alert others. It reminds those of us who can see to exercise simple courtesy and common sense in approaching a blind person. By providing assistance when it is desired, or often just by yielding the right of way, we can help assure safe passage and safeguard the right of visually handicapped persons to enjoy unhindered mobility.

To make all Americans more fully aware of the significance and importance of the white cane and the need for extra alertness and consideration when approaching its user, the Congress, by a joint resolution approved October 6, 1964 (78 Stat. 1003; 36 U.S.C. 169d), has authorized the President to proclaim October 15 of each year as White Cane Safety Day.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GERALD R. FORD, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim October 15, 1976, as White Cane Safety Day.

On this occasion, I urge all sighted Americans to increase their knowledge and understanding of the needs and rights of visually handicapped Americans. In particular, each of us should be prepared to heed the message of the white cane and grant its users the extra measure of care necessary to their physical safety, self-confidence, and peace of mind.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this first day of September 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

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