

Presidential Documents

Proclamation 7190 of April 30, 1999

Older Americans Month, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

As we look forward to the 21st century, we honor the millions of older Americans whose contributions have strengthened and sustained our Nation throughout the 20th century. These special citizens have led us through times of conflict, depression, peace, and prosperity and have witnessed firsthand the milestones that have defined this era as the "American Century." This month, as we salute their achievements, let us also renew our commitment to preserve for older Americans a quality of life that will help them look ahead to the future with peace of mind.

In recent decades, extraordinary advances in science, technology, and medicine, as well as our increased awareness of the importance of good nutrition and physical fitness, have enabled Americans to live longer, healthier lives. Over the course of the past 100 years, the average American's life-span has lengthened by nearly three decades, with the percentage of older Americans in our population more than tripling. By the year 2030, one in five Americans will be aged 65 or older.

As we enter the new millennium with a strong economy and the first budget surpluses since the 1960s, we have a historic opportunity to embrace the challenges and possibilities of a society where men and women will lead longer, more active, more productive lives. My Administration is working to make the most of this opportunity by proposing to set aside more than 75 percent of any budget surplus over the next 15 years to protect Social Security and Medicare; and we will also work to increase our investment in the scientific and medical research and development programs that will continue to lengthen and improve the lives of Americans in the years to come. We must continue to support older Americans—as well as their caregivers and those who provide critical home and community-based services—through a strong, reauthorized Older Americans Act; and we must work to ensure that long-term care needs are met now and in the future.

The theme of this year's celebration, "Honor the Past, Imagine the Future: Towards a Society for all Ages," reminds us of the profound debt of gratitude we owe to the generations of older Americans whose hard work, courage, faith, sacrifice, and patriotism helped to make this Nation great. Through turmoil and triumph, these Americans not only have defended our fundamental values of liberty, justice, and equality, but they also have handed down to younger generations the enduring traditions of community, family, and love of country that bind our society together.

Long life is a gift we must cherish and a wonderful opportunity and responsibility for which we must prepare. I urge all Americans to take time during this month to reaffirm our commitment, as individuals and as a Nation, to meet the challenges of an aging society. Working together, we can improve the lives of our older citizens, their families, and their caregivers and strive to ensure that all Americans enjoy healthy, financially secure, and productive lives.

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 May 1999 as Older Americans Month. I urge Government officials, business people, community leaders, educators, volunteers, and all the other people of the United States to celebrate the contributions older Americans have made throughout their lives to the progress of our Nation.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this thirtieth day of April, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-third.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "William J. Clinton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "W" and "C".

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