

Presidential Documents

Title 3—

Proclamation 6928 of October 4, 1996

The President

Roosevelt History Month, 1996

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The Roosevelt family has uniquely influenced the direction and quality of life in America for the last century. With two enormously successful Presidents, Teddy and FDR, and a precedent-setting First Lady, Eleanor, the Roosevelt family has left a lasting legacy of exemplary leadership and public service to our Nation.

In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt established our country's first National Wildlife Refuge. Thanks to his vision and determination, America today enjoys the natural treasures preserved in the largest and most varied conservation system in the world. From 1933 to 1945, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, with the support of his wife, Anna Eleanor Roosevelt, guided the United States through two of the gravest crises of the 20th century: the Great Depression and World War II. Universally recognized as one of the greatest American Presidents, FDR stands as a symbol of the greatness of our Nation itself. Eleanor Roosevelt, his lifelong companion and dearest friend, transformed the role of the First Lady, traveling the country as an advocate for the poor, the disenfranchised, and the disadvantaged.

Together, their partnership redefined the modern First Family, combining a broad concern for all Americans with a strong sense of the dignity and history of the Presidency. In a time of acute national anxiety, FDR promised Americans "a leadership of frankness and vigor." He recognized that government had to be responsive to the needs of its people and that the Presidency is not merely an executive office but also a position of moral leadership. President Roosevelt moved Americans toward hope, through perseverance and faith in themselves. He spoke directly to average Americans, not only through his fireside chats on radio, but also through his insistence on honesty and justice.

He fought for fairness in government, working to establish Federal programs that met the needs of his time: a welcome job for an idle but eager worker; a government loan to help a family avoid foreclosure; and a retirement income system that still serves working Americans nearly 60 years later. These achievements were steps on the road to FDR's dream of establishing a government that would serve as a model for the world.

In Franklin Roosevelt's view, government should be the perfect public system for fostering and protecting the "Four Freedoms" he enumerated when he addressed the Congress in January 1941. Intended as a rallying cry against the economic and military specters that had swept the globe during the previous decade, this speech recognized four essential freedoms: freedom of speech and expression; freedom of every person to worship God in his own way; freedom from want; and freedom from fear. Roosevelt made it clear that he enumerated these freedoms not as abstract ideals but as goals toward which Americans—and caring people everywhere—could direct their most strenuous public efforts.

Millions of people around the world remember with gratitude his determined leadership as the successful Commander in Chief of America's Armed Forces during this century's most terrible war. It is difficult to imagine any individual other than Franklin Roosevelt who would have been able to oversee

the war effort—not only beating back the spreading stain of totalitarianism by achieving decisive military victories, but also adroitly maintaining unity among our allies. As the world moved under a deepening shadow of violence and terror, FDR displayed an unwavering personal character and resolve that inspired faith among the American people.

And even though FDR did not survive to witness the end of the war he helped so much to win, he nonetheless knew he had set our country's sights in the right direction by dedicating his public career to a safer, stronger America—citizens living and working together in a community of fairness, harmony, and peace. As the final words of his Four Freedoms speech expressed: "To that high concept there can be no end save victory."

After her husband's death, Eleanor Roosevelt continued the vigorous advocacy work she and FDR had begun in the White House, serving on the United States Delegation to the United Nations, acting as Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission during the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the U.N. in 1948, working as a member of the National Advisory Committee of the Peace Corps for President Kennedy, and finally serving as Chair of President Kennedy's Commission on the Status of Women. By the time of her death in 1962, she had earned the unofficial title of First Lady of the World, reaffirming the virtues to which she and her husband had dedicated their 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 October 1996 as Roosevelt History Month. I call upon government officials, educators, labor leaders, employers, and the people of the United States to observe this month with appropriate programs and activities.

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



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