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# Presidential Documents

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**Title 3—**

**Proclamation 7043 of October 17, 1997**

**The President**

**National Character Counts Week, 1997**

**By the President of the United States of America**

## **A Proclamation**

The roots of America's greatness are embedded in the character of its citizens. From our Founders' passion for justice and equality to the social consciousness and humanitarian spirit of today's citizens, the character of our people has inspired the world. Undeniably, character does count for our citizens, our communities, and our Nation, and this week we celebrate the importance of character in our individual lives and in the life of our country.

Instilling sound character in our children is essential to maintaining the strength of our Nation into the 21st century. The core ethical values of trustworthiness, fairness, responsibility, caring, respect, and citizenship form the foundation of our democracy, our economy, and our society. These qualities are not innate but learned, and we must ensure that we nurture them—both through our words and our example—in our Nation's young people.

More than any other institution, the family is the cradle of character, giving children their first crucial lessons in attitude and behavior. In today's complex society, where children are subject to pressures and negative influences rarely experienced by earlier generations, parents face great challenges as they strive to impart to their children the values that will help them become caring and responsible members of society.

My Administration has worked hard to give parents new tools to help them fulfill their important responsibilities. We worked to require V-chips on all new televisions to give parents greater control over what their children watch; we collaborated with the television industry to encourage the airing of more educational programming for children; and we negotiated a breakthrough agreement with the entertainment and broadcast industries to create a voluntary ratings system that will help parents identify programs containing material inappropriate for children. Our proposed funding for the Anti-Gang and Youth Violence Strategy will provide for after-school initiatives in communities across the country to help keep young people occupied in wholesome activities, off the streets, and out of trouble while their parents are at work.

Schools also have an important role in educating our young people about the difference between right and wrong. My Administration has recognized this by creating partnerships with the States to help our schools do a better job of teaching character to America's students. Our push for rigorous standards and our promise to open the doors of college to all students who work hard let students know that good character really does count and will be rewarded with expanded opportunity. We also should encourage and commend the schools across our country that have begun to incorporate volunteer service as a curriculum requirement, teaching students the important life lessons of sharing, compassion, and civic responsibility.

Developing strong values in America's children requires the participation of all our people. As we observe this special week, I ask that all Americans demonstrate in their personal and public lives, and teach actively to our country's children, the high ethical standards that are essential to good character and to the continued success of our Nation.

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 19 through October 25, 1997, as National Character Counts Week. I call upon the people of the United States, government officials, educators, religious, community, and business leaders, and the States to commemorate this week with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs.

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

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".