

## Presidential Documents

**Proclamation 7259 of December 7, 1999**

### **National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, 1999**

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

#### **A Proclamation**

Early on Sunday morning, December 7, 1941, the 130 vessels of the U.S. Pacific Fleet lay quiet and serene in Pearl Harbor. American sailors were preparing to raise colors, unaware that the worst naval disaster in American history was about to unfold. As the first wave of Japanese planes dropped torpedo bombs on the fleet, all eight battleships along with three destroyers and three light cruisers were hit. Two hours after the first Japanese bomber hit its target, 21 ships of the U.S. Pacific Fleet lay sunk or badly damaged. U.S. aircraft losses included 188 planes destroyed and another 159 damaged. Before the bombing was over, some 3,500 Americans had been killed or injured. The sinking of the battleship *USS ARIZONA* remains the most recognized symbol of that tragic day. Of the *ARIZONA*'s crew, 1,177 were killed, nearly half of all the deaths suffered at Pearl Harbor.

Time has not dimmed our memory of the ferocity of that attack 58 years ago or the pain of the losses we suffered. The assault brought shock and grief not only to the families and loved ones of those who were injured or lost their lives, but also to our entire country.

The attack on Pearl Harbor shook our Nation but strengthened our resolve. Two days later, in a Fireside Chat, President Roosevelt affirmed that resolve in explaining America's sudden thrust into World War II: "We don't like it—we didn't want to get in it—but we are in it and we're going to fight it with everything we've got. We are going to win the war and we are going to win the peace that follows." Just as the American forces at Pearl Harbor responded to the attack with great courage, the United States responded with determination that this assault would not keep us from victory over the Axis powers. Union leaders agreed not to strike for the duration of the war as President Roosevelt garnered the support of our working men and women to increase war production and build our "Arsenal of Democracy." Millions of American patriots joined the Armed Forces, willing to serve and sacrifice in the cause of freedom.

Rising from the destruction at Pearl Harbor, all but three of the ships sunk there were repaired and put back into service. Less than 4 years later, the Pacific Fleet sailed victoriously into Tokyo Bay. Today, the Battleship Missouri Memorial is docked on Pearl Harbor's Battleship Row, a fitting tribute to our triumph in World War II. It was Pearl Harbor that cemented the United States resolve to win the war, and it was aboard the "Mighty Mo" that the Japanese signed surrender documents in 1945, and peace in the Pacific was finally realized.

Pearl Harbor is both a reminder of what can happen when we are unprepared and a call for continuing vigilance in defense of our Nation. The world has changed greatly since that dark day more than half a century ago, but our need to remain engaged is more crucial than ever. We must never forget the lessons of Pearl Harbor or the courage, determination, and indomitable spirit of that generation of Americans who recovered from a devastating defeat to win the ultimate victory for freedom, democracy, and peace.

The Congress, by Public Law 103-308, has designated December 7, 1999, as "National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim December 7, 1999, as National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day. I urge all Americans to observe this day with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities in honor of the Americans who served at Pearl Harbor. I also ask all Federal departments and agencies, organizations, and individuals to fly the flag of the United States at half-staff on this day in honor of those Americans who died as a result of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this seventh day of December, 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-fourth.

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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