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Independence Day Speech Resources: Fact Sheet

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Introduction

Independence Day, often called the Fourth of July, is a federal holiday recognizing the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. This year marks the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and the birth of the United States of America.

This guide is designed to assist congressional offices with work related to Independence Day events. It contains links to census and demographic information, CRS reports, sample speeches and remarks from the *Congressional Record*, and presidential proclamations and remarks. It also contains links to selected historical and cultural resources.

History

On July 4, 1777, the first anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence was marked by a nearly spontaneous celebration in Philadelphia, as described in a letter by John Adams to his daughter, Abigail “Nabby” Adams.¹ Although the Declaration of Independence was officially adopted on July 4, 1776, the vote by the Continental Congress to approve it occurred two days prior, on July 2, 1776.² Adams originally predicted that celebrations would occur annually on this earlier date, as noted in a letter to his wife, Abigail Adams, in 1776:

The Second Day of July 1776, will be the most memorable Epoque, in the History of America.—I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated, by succeeding Generations, as the great anniversary Festival. It ought to be commemorated, as the Day of Deliverance by solemn Acts of Devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with Pomp and Parade, with Shews, Games, Sports, Guns, Bells, Bonfires and Illuminations from one End of this Continent to the other from this Time forward forever more.³

After that initial celebration in 1777, the traditional observance of Independence Day on the Fourth of July took hold, becoming commonplace after the War of 1812.

Congress declared July 4 an official holiday in the District of Columbia in 1870 (16 Stat. 168) and a paid holiday for federal employees in 1938 (52 Stat. 1246).

Legislation

- 16 Stat. 168, June 28, 1870
- 52 Stat. 1246, June 29, 1938
- P.L. 86-362, September 22, 1959

CRS Reports

- CRS In Focus IF13165, *Commemoration of the 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence: Coins and Medals*, by Jacob R. Straus

¹ “John Adams to Abigail Adams 2d, 5 July 1777,” Founders Online, U.S. National Archives and Records Service, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/04-02-02-0216>.

² “Adoption of the Resolution Calling for Independence from England” (July 2, 1776) in the Papers of the Continental Congress, U.S. National Archives and Records Service, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/301685>.

³ “John Adams to Abigail Adams, 3 July 1776,” Founders Online, U.S. National Archives and Records Service, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/04-02-02-0016>.

- CRS Report R41990, *Federal Holidays: Evolution and Current Practices*, by Jacob R. Straus
- CRS Report R48473, *Congressional Involvement in the Celebration of Anniversaries of the Declaration of Independence*, by Jacob R. Straus

Selected Congressional Speeches and Recognitions

Members of Congress often make floor statements, issue press releases, or enter extensions of remarks into the *Congressional Record* to recognize federal holidays and observances. The following are some recent examples that may be of assistance in preparing such statements:

- Representative Brad Schneider, “10th News: Celebrating Freedom,” Brad’s Newsletter, June 30, 2026
- Senator Jim Banks, “Banks Honors America’s 250th Anniversary on the Senate Floor,” press release, June 24, 2026
- Senator John Curtis, “Curtis Announces 250-Mile Walk for America’s 250th Anniversary,” press release, June 18, 2026
- Representative Ron Estes, “Honoring America 250 and the Daughters of the Union Veterans of the Civil War Bench Dedication in Wichita,” *Congressional Record*, Vol. 172, No. 96 (June 8, 2026), p. E538
- Senator Chris Coons, “Remarks: Senator Coons marks America’s 250th anniversary with call to renew nation’s commitment to liberty and justice for all,” press release, June 24, 2026
- Senator Chuck Grassley, “250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence,” *Congressional Record*, vol. 172, No. 4 (January 7, 2026), p.S63
- Senator Jerry Moran, “Happy Independence Day!” press release, July 7, 2025
- Representative Rick Allen, “Happy Independence Day,” press release, July 4, 2025
- Delegate Aumua Amata Coleman Radewagen, “Amata’s Statement in Celebration of the Fourth of July,” press release, July 3, 2025
- Representative Tom Cole, “Reflecting on Independence Day,” press release, July 10, 2024
- Representative Sheila Jackson Lee, “Celebrating July 4th Independence Day 2024,” *Congressional Record*, vol. 170 (July 5, 2024), p. E693

Presidential Proclamations and Remarks

One of the many uses of a presidential proclamation is to ceremoniously honor a group or call attention to certain issues or events. Some recent proclamations commemorating Independence Day from the *Compilation of Presidential Documents* include the following:

- Presidential Proclamations and Remarks—Donald J. Trump (2025-)⁴
- Presidential Proclamations and Remarks—Joseph R. Biden Jr. (2021-2025)

⁴ Link provides access to proclamations, statements, and remarks made by President Trump during both of his nonconsecutive terms, where available.

- Presidential Proclamations and Remarks—Donald J. Trump (2017-2021)⁵
- Presidential Proclamations and Remarks—Barack H. Obama (2009-2017)
- Presidential Proclamations and Remarks—George W. Bush (2001-2009)
- Presidential Proclamations and Remarks—William J. Clinton (1993-2001)

Presidential proclamations and remarks since 1993 are available through the GovInfo service on the Government Publishing Office website. Earlier remarks (including selected audio and video clips) are available through, established by the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Notable Independence Day Speeches

Additional speeches delivered by notable historical figures include the following:

- John Quincy Adams, “Speech on Independence Day,” delivered on July 4, 1821
- Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?,” delivered on July 5, 1852
- Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Fourth of July Address,” delivered on July 4, 1941 (audio)

Statistics

Many federal agencies maintain statistics on Fourth of July events. Two examples are the following:

1. U.S. Census Bureau, “The Fourth of July: The Nation’s Population Then and Now.” This article includes U.S. population estimates from when it was 13 colonies to July 2025.
2. U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (via USA.gov), “Firework Injury Stats and Safety Tips.”

Historical and Cultural Resources

Numerous government resources provide information on the history and culture of the holiday. Some of these include the following:

- U.S. Department of the Interior, “Freedom 250: Celebrating the Triumph of the American Spirit.” Includes information about the restoration of historical sites and paying tribute to American historical figures.
- U.S. Department of State, “Celebrating 250 Years of American History.” Includes a historical account of American diplomacy, the people who signed the Declaration of Independence and a historical timeline of the American revolution.
- National Park Service, “NPS Commemorations and Celebrations: Events Celebrating America’s 250th Birthday.” Includes information about featured celebrations at Mount Rushmore, on the National Mall, and in New York Harbor.

⁵ Link provides access to proclamations, statements, and remarks made by President Trump during both of his nonconsecutive terms, where available.

- U.S. Government Publishing Office (GPO), “America’s 250th Anniversary.” Includes a pamphlet of the Declaration of Independence, a pocket edition of the U.S. Constitution, and information on other major milestones (Centennial, Sesquicentennial, and Bicentennial).
- Library of Congress, “Today in History: July 4.” A presentation of historical facts about July 4 highlighted by items from the Library’s American Memory collections.
- National Archives and Records Administration, “The Declaration of Independence: A Transcription.” An official transcript of the full text of the Declaration of Independence, including a list of the 56 signatures that appear on the original document.
- Smithsonian Institution, “Independence Day: July 4th.” In this resource, the Smithsonian showcases its Fourth of July collections, which includes documents, pamphlets, photographs, posters, and more.
- U.S. Department of State, “Independence Day, July 4.” Pamphlet includes the history of Independence Day, the Liberty Bell, and the song “America, the Beautiful” (with sheet music).
- Library of Congress, “Patriotic Melodies.” A collection of articles that tell the story behind many patriotic songs, including links to digital audio and additional sound recordings.
- GPO, “Our Flag.” A resource from the Federal Citizen Information Center with the history of and related facts about the U.S. flag.

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