

THANKSGIVING DAY, 2011

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A PROCLAMATION

One of our Nation's oldest and most cherished traditions, Thanksgiving Day brings us closer to our loved ones and invites us to reflect on the blessings that enrich our lives. The observance recalls the celebration of an autumn harvest centuries ago, when the Wampanoag tribe joined the Pilgrims at Plymouth Colony to share in the fruits of a bountiful season. The feast honored the Wampanoag for generously extending their knowledge of local game and agriculture to the Pilgrims, and today we renew our gratitude to all American Indians and Alaska Natives. We take this time to remember the ways that the First Americans have enriched our Nation's heritage, from their generosity centuries ago to the everyday contributions they make to all facets of American life. As we come together with friends, family, and neighbors to celebrate, let us set aside our daily concerns and give thanks for the providence bestowed upon us.

Though our traditions have evolved, the spirit of grace and humility at the heart of Thanksgiving has persisted through every chapter of our story. When President George Washington proclaimed our country's first Thanksgiving, he praised a generous and knowing God for shepherding our young Republic through its uncertain beginnings. Decades later, President Abraham Lincoln looked to the divine to protect those who had known the worst of civil war, and to restore the Nation "to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility, and union."

In times of adversity and times of plenty, we have lifted our hearts by giving humble thanks for the blessings we have received and for those who bring meaning to our lives. Today, let us offer gratitude to our men and women in uniform for their many sacrifices, and keep in our thoughts the families who save an empty seat at the table for a loved one stationed in harm's way. And as members of our American family make do with less, let us rededicate ourselves to our friends and fellow citizens in need of a helping hand.

As we gather in our communities and in our homes, around the table or near the hearth, we give thanks to each other and to God for the many kindnesses and comforts that grace our lives. Let us pause to recount the simple gifts that sustain us, and resolve to pay them forward in the year to come.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 24, 2011, as a National Day of Thanksgiving. I encourage the people of the United States to come together -- whether in our homes, places of worship, community centers, or any place of fellowship for friends and neighbors -- to give thanks for all we have received in the past year, to express appreciation to those whose lives enrich our own, and to share our bounty with others.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this sixteenth day of November, in the year of our Lord two thousand eleven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-sixth.

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