

What Is Law Day?

A national day set aside to celebrate the rule of law, Law Day underscores how law and the legal process have contributed to the freedoms that all Americans share.

When Is Law Day Celebrated?

May 1 is the official date, but celebrations often take place either before or after that date. Some bar associations celebrate Law Week or Law Month. Law Day also provides an opportunity to recognize the role of courts in our democracy.

How Did Law Day Begin?

1957 American Bar Association President Charles S. Rhyne, a Washington, D.C., attorney, envisions a special national day for celebrating our legal system.

1958 President Dwight D. Eisenhower establishes Law Day as a day of national dedication to the principles of government under law.

1968 May 1 is designated by joint resolution of Congress as the official date for celebrating Law Day.

What Is the Law Day 2009 Theme?

A Legacy of Liberty—Celebrating Lincoln’s Bicentennial

Why Is This Theme Important?

In 2009 we will mark the bicentennial of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, regarded by many as our nation’s greatest and most eloquent president. Lincoln, who devoted much of his adult life to the practice of law, was the quintessential American lawyer-president. His background in the law informed both his actions and his oratory.

In his Gettysburg Address of 1863, Lincoln articulated his vision of American constitutional union, to be forged in the crucible of a “great civil war” and tested by the shared anguish of national sacrifice. For Lincoln, this vision begins—fourscore and seven years before—with the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration marks the origins of “a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.”

Do the animating principles of which Lincoln spoke at Gettysburg still represent “unfinished work”? What is the role of law in fulfilling the promises of the Declaration of Independence? For Law Day 2009, we encourage efforts nationwide to commemorate Lincoln by exploring this rich and resonant theme—*A Legacy of Liberty*.

