



Geography Awareness Week Frequently Asked Questions

What is Geography Awareness Week?

Geography Awareness Week (GAW) is celebrated annually during the third week of November. It was first established by a 1987 joint resolution of Congress (see Joint Resolution, below). The week has been continuously celebrated ever since. Traditionally, GAW is publically proclaimed by state Governors and features school-based activities conducted under the auspices of the National Geographic Society and other geography education advocates. The purpose of GAW is to draw attention to what geography is, why it is important, and how American citizens can ensure access to a robust geography education that prepares them to participate in global social and economic activities and to make decisions regarding people, places and environments.

Although celebrations, events, and activities are encouraged of all communities, schools, and organizations, the largest GAW celebrations have been conducted primarily by National Geographic's *Geography Action!* program; the GIS software leader, ESRI; and the My Wonderful World campaign.

GAW occurs simultaneously with International Education Week, which is led by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of State.

Where Can I Find Geography Awareness Week Resources Online?

The national Web site for Geography Awareness Week is hosted by the My Wonderful World campaign at: <http://www.MyWonderfulWorld.org/gaw>.

Where is Media Information on Geography Awareness Week Available?

Annually, the National Geographic Society provides press releases and other information to the media regarding GAW. Recent media releases are located in the Society's online "Press Room": <http://press.nationalgeographic.com/pressroom/index.jsp?siteID=1>.

What is the My Wonderful World Campaign?

My Wonderful World is a coalition of 26 national business and non-profit organizations working to expand geographic learning in school, at home, and in communities. MWW promotes the importance of the need "to give kids the power of global knowledge." Some 80,000 individuals have signed up to join the campaign at: <http://www.mywonderfulworld.org/index.html>.

What is the Geography Action! Program?

Geography Action! is an annual awareness program that provides training and resources for educators across North America and beyond to inform and excite their students and communities about the planet's natural, cultural, and historic treasures. Each year, the program kicks off with

a national summer training for teachers, preparing them with new and creative ways incorporate geography into their classrooms and schools and how to train other teachers to do the same. Their work culminates during Geography Awareness Week, when schools across North America celebrate with geography themed events, often using the event template provided by the program. Information and program materials for multiple geographic themes are available at: <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/geography-action/index.html>.

What is GIS Day?

Pioneered and championed by ESRI, a leading geospatial software company, GIS Day is an annual grassroots event that encourages geographic information system (GIS) users and vendors to connect with local schools, businesses, and the general public to showcase the real-world applications of this important technology. Information about the day and how to find a local event, as well as GIS Day materials, is available online at: <http://www.gisday.com/>.

Can I Conduct a Geography Awareness Week Event?

Everyone is encouraged to conduct a GAW event—you may either follow suggested models or come up with an activity of your own. Suggested school-based events are available on the *Geography Action!* Web site. Both suggested GIS Day events for schools and GIS professionals as well as planned local events are available on the GIS Day Web site. Suggested online activities for parents and others are available on the My Wonderful World Web site. Proposed International Education week activities are available at: <http://iew.state.gov/involved.cfm>. Planning to conduct an event? Please let us know by email at Mywonderfulworld@ngs.org.

Joint Resolution of Congress Establishing Geography Awareness Week

The 1987 Joint Resolution of Congress that first formally established GAW reads as follows:

One-Hundredth Congress of the United States of America

AT THE FIRST SESSION

*Begun and held at the City of Washington on Tuesday, the sixth day of January,
one thousand nine hundred and eighty-seven*

Joint Resolution

To designate the period commencing November 15, 1987, and ending November 21, 1987, as “Geography Awareness Week”.

Whereas the United States of America is a truly unique nation with diverse landscapes, bountiful resources, a distinctive multiethnic population, and a rich cultural heritage, all of which contributes

to the status of the United States as a world power;
Whereas geography is the study of people, their environments, and their resources;
Whereas, historically, geography has aided Americans in understanding the wholeness of their vast nation and the great abundance of its natural resources;
Whereas geography today offers perspectives and information in understanding ourselves, our relationship to the Earth, and our interdependence with other peoples of the world;
Whereas 20 percent of American elementary school students asked to locate the United States on a world map placed it in Brazil;
Whereas 95 percent of American college freshmen tested could not locate Vietnam on a world map;
Whereas 75 percent of Americans responding to a nationwide survey could not locate El Salvador on a map, while 63 percent could not name the two nations involved in the SALT talks;
Whereas over 20 percent of American teachers currently teaching geography have taken no classes in the subject and, therefore, do not have the training necessary to effectively teach geographic concepts;
Whereas departments of geography are being eliminated from American institutes of higher learning, thus endangering the discipline of geography in the United States;
Whereas traditional geography has virtually disappeared from the curricula of American schools while still being taught as a basic subject in other countries, including Great Britain, Canada, Japan, and the Soviet Union;
Whereas an ignorance of geography, foreign languages, and cultures places the United States at a disadvantage with other countries in matters of business, politics, and the environment;
Whereas the United States is a nation of worldwide involvements and global influence, the responsibilities of which demand an understanding of the lands, languages, and cultures of the world;
and
Whereas national attention must be focused on the integral role that knowledge of world geography plays in preparing citizens of the United States for the future of an increasingly interdependent and interconnected world; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the period commencing November 15, 1987, and ending November 21, 1987, is designated as "Geography Awareness Week", and the President is authorized and requested to issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to observe such week with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

Jim Wright
Speaker of the House of Representatives

John Stennis
President of the Senate Pro Tempore

APPROVED
July 24 1987

Ronald Reagan