

County of Santa Rosa

PROCLAMATION

In 1958 President Dwight D. Eisenhower established the first Law Day as “a day of national dedication to the principles of government under law.” Every president since has taken the occasion of Law Day as an annual opportunity to proclaim our nation’s ongoing commitment to the democratic rule of law.

This year Law Day provides us with an opportunity to consider the important legacy of the first American lawyer-president and one of our nation’s greatest founders, John Adams.

In 1770 Massachusetts lawyer John Adams represented the British officer and soldiers accused in the “Boston Massacre” of killing five colonists protesting in the streets. Although already a prominent leader in the American colonial resistance to British parliamentary authority, the 35-year-old Adams agreed to take on the cases because, in his own words, “Judgment of Death against those Soldiers would have been as foul a Stain upon this Country as the Executions of the Quakers or Witches, anciently.”

Adams’s role in the trials has come to be seen as a lawyerly exemplar of adherence to the rule of law and zealous defense of the rights of the accused, even in cases where advocates may represent unpopular clients and become involved in matters that generate public controversy. His able defense was motivated by his faith in due process of law, in what he would later famously phrase as “a government of laws, not of men.”

Indeed, writing the *Novanglus* essays in 1775, Adams wrote of this famous phrase for the first time. It expressed his firmly held belief in the rule of law as the foundation for republican government and the basis for political liberty. It was subsequently incorporated into the 1780 Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, written principally by Adams and a model for the U.S. Constitution of 1787.

On this Law Day, all Americans should reflect on the legal legacy of John Adams: the enduring meaning of “a government of laws, not men” and the vital role our legal institutions—including our adversarial legal system, citizen juries, and independent courts—play in our system. By appreciating our legal rights and valuing our civic responsibilities, Americans can work together to sustain our national commitment to a democratic society under law.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Board of County Commissioners of Santa Rosa County, in accordance with Public Law 87-20, as amended, do hereby proclaim May 1, 2011, as **Law Day, U.S.A.** and call upon all people of Santa Rosa County to acknowledge the importance of our nation’s legal and judicial systems with appropriate ceremonies and activities, and to display the flag of the United States in support of this national observance.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of County Commissioners of Santa Rosa County, Florida, this 28th day of April, 2011.



**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SANTA ROSA COUNTY, FLORIDA**

BY: _____
Lane Lynchard, Chairman