May 1

LAWday

Celebrating our liberty under the law!

• Law Day is a special day in the United States to celebrate how we use laws to solve problems and to make sure everyone in our country is treated fairly.

• The tradition of celebrating Law Day began in 1958 when President Dwight D. Eisenhower proclaimed that every year on May 1 we, as a nation, "should remember with pride" how our laws help people to be treated fairly and how our laws have inspired other countries to treat their citizens more fairly.

• Why Law Day is celebrated on May 1 is a very interesting history lesson. When the Soviet Union existed and was a major world power, the Soviets had a parade every year on May 1 to display their new weapons. This parade showed that the Soviet Union was a nation that ruled by force. To prove the difference between our nations, American politicians and lawyers wanted to show that we were a nation that is ruled by laws made by our citizens so we began celebrating Law Day on May 1.

Suggested Activities:

Grades K-5 — Classroom rules are excellent parallels to our legal system. First, teachers may want to point out that they tell their students about the rules and the consequences for not following the rules at the beginning of the year, so students have "notice" of both the rules and the consequences. Second, ask the students why they think it is good to have classroom rules: Are they about making sure everyone is safe? Are they about giving everybody a chance to learn? (Extension: ask the students how laws made it safer for them to come to school that morning i.e. traffic laws, bus inspections and bus driver licensing.)

Grades 6-12 — Ask the students what they think the phrase "liberty and justice for all" means in the Pledge of Allegiance. How have laws, including our Constitution, helped to make "liberty and justice for all" possible? (As discussion points, have the students look at the following Constitutional Amendments: 4th, 6th, 15th, 19th and 26th.)

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