

WHEREAS, in August 1961, East German soldiers began building a wall, dividing East and West Berlin, to close off access of East Germans from the communist East Germany from fleeing to the democratic areas of West Berlin and West Germany. For 28 years, this 15-foot concrete wall, fortified with barbed wire, electrified fences and watchtowers that circled West Berlin, stood as the “iron curtain” dividing Europe, one side Soviet communist control, the other freedom and democracy of the West; and

WHEREAS, on June 12, 1987, President Ronald Reagan delivered a passionate speech in West Berlin, talking about freedom, prosperity and the possibility for fundamental change in the Soviet Union, to be part of a safe and free world. And, as he stood in front of the Brandenburg Gate at the Berlin Wall, President Reagan said those famous six words that helped move the world to change, and therefore changed the lives of people worldwide for years to come: “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!”; and

WHEREAS, on November 9, 1989, with the continuing decline of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe, and the increasing perseverance of East Germans striving for democracy, in a powerful act of freedom, Germans from both sides of the wall joined to tear down the icon of division. The Berlin Wall came down, marking the reunification of Berlin, Germany and the people who wanted to live a better life; and

WHEREAS, because of the leadership of the Berlin American High School Alumni Association (also known as the “Berlin Brats” Alumni Association) who recognized it’s historical significance, acquired a piece of the Berlin Wall after it fell, and donated it to the American Overseas Schools Historical Society. And, with the Society’s generosity, the people of Wichita, Sedgwick County and Kansas can see a piece of this world history on loan to the Museum of World Treasures.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that I, Tim Norton, chairman of the Board of Sedgwick County Commissioners, do hereby acknowledge November 9, 2012 as

“WORLD FREEDOM DAY”

as proclaimed by U.S. presidents for many years, and ask citizens to reflect on the rich world events of our past and reaffirm our hearts to freedom and democracy.

October 31, 2012