



Child Health Day, 1989

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

In this most fortunate of nations, millions of us can look with pride and gratitude upon happy, healthy children and grandchildren—children who are able to enjoy all the wonderful opportunities life offers. However, we cannot afford to forget that each year tens of thousands of children in this country die before reaching their first birthday.

Our hearts ache over this country's high rate of infant mortality, a rate that is all the more tragic because it occurs in a Nation that boasts one of the highest standards of living in the world. The statistics cannot reveal the suffering of bereaved parents, for their anguish is immeasurable. Nor can numbers reflect the costs incurred by our entire country. When the life of a child is destroyed, so, too, is the promise that he or she holds for our Nation's future. A society that fails to protect its most vulnerable members from harm suffers untold losses itself.

The failure of pregnant women to obtain adequate prenatal care is a major factor in our Nation's high infant mortality rate. While the government must not usurp the role of the family—and while it cannot fulfill parents' responsibilities in caring for their children—public officials at the Federal and State level are examining ways to help improve child health in the United States. Together with health care providers, insurers, and other concerned Americans, government officials have been working to develop ways to encourage more pregnant women to protect the lives of their unborn children through proper nutrition and prenatal care.

Already, advances in technology have enabled us to save the lives of babies who are born prematurely, or who develop dangerous illnesses and conditions while still in the womb. Scientific discoveries have helped us to reduce the incidence of some debilitating and life-threatening childhood diseases, and even eliminate others. Thanks to effective immunization programs, fear of the spread of diseases such as polio and smallpox is virtually a thing of the past. Nevertheless, we still face great challenges and responsibilities in the area of child health.

We must continue to encourage parents to have their children immunized, and we must promote education in child nutrition, safety, and hygiene. We must also recognize that our fight against drug abuse is a life-and-death struggle for the fate of a generation—in hospital nurseries and foster homes across the country, infants who were born addicted to drugs or infected with the AIDS virus provide heartrending evidence of the devastation wrought by chemical dependency. Children who grow up in homes torn apart by drug and alcohol abuse are also at grave risk. For their sake, for the sake of their families, and for the sake of our Nation's future, we must redouble our efforts in the war on substance abuse.

Today, as we begin the 7th decade of this national observance for children, let us resolve to ensure that every American child receives the best possible start in life—beginning with quality health care throughout pregnancy for expectant mothers and extending through each child's formative years.

The Congress, by Joint Resolution approved May 18, 1928, as amended (36 U.S.C. 143), has called for the designation of the first Monday in October as "Child Health Day" and has authorized and requested the President to issue annually a proclamation in observance of this event.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE BUSH, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim Monday, October 2, 1989, as Child Health Day. I urge all Americans to rededicate themselves to protecting the lives and health of our youngest and most vulnerable citizens.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-ninth day of September, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and fourteenth.

George Bush