



American Heart Month, 1990

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Approximately every 32 seconds, someone in the United States dies of some form of heart and blood vessel disease. Heart attack, stroke, and other cardiovascular disease kills nearly one million Americans every year. In fact, cardiovascular diseases cause almost as many deaths annually as cancer, accidents, pneumonia, influenza, and all other causes of death combined.

Nearly 67 million Americans currently suffer from one or more forms of cardiovascular disease, including high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, rheumatic heart disease, and stroke. While many people mistakenly assume that heart disease occurs primarily in old age, studies show that 5 percent of all heart attacks occur in people under age 40, and more than 45 percent occur in people before age 65.

Women as well as men are at risk. Heart attack is the number one killer of American women, surpassing even breast cancer and lung cancer. Approximately 244,000 of the more than 512,000 people who die each year of heart attack—nearly half—are women. In all, heart attack and other forms of heart and blood vessel disease claim the lives of nearly half a million women each year.

Cardiovascular diseases exact an incalculable toll in human pain and suffering. They also inflict a heavy cost on our Nation in terms of health care expenses and lost productivity. The annual costs of cardiovascular-related physician and nursing services, hospital and nursing home services, medications, and lost work due to disability total in the billions of dollars.

Fortunately, the outlook is not all gloomy. The latest reports show that age-adjusted death rates for cardiovascular diseases declined slightly more than 24 percent between 1977 and 1988. Advances in both the treatment and the prevention of heart and blood vessel diseases account for much of this progress.

Since 1948, the Federal Government, through the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, and the American Heart Association, a private not-for-profit organization, have spent millions of dollars on educational programs and research into cardiovascular diseases. The American Heart Association estimates that it has invested more than \$823 million on research since it became a national voluntary health organization in the late 1940s. That great investment has been made possible by the generosity of the American public and the dedicated efforts of the Association's 2.7 million volunteers.

Financial support from the Federal Government and the American Heart Association has helped physicians and scientists make many advances in cardiovascular health care. However, these funds have also provided for valuable educational programs designed to help individual Americans learn what they can do to avoid heart attack and stroke.

For example, we now know the importance of a low-fat, low-cholesterol diet, and we understand the need to control high blood pressure. Americans have also accepted warnings about the dangers of smoking, and what was once a socially acceptable habit has now become unacceptable. Controlling one's weight and exercising regularly have also become a healthy part of the life-styles of many of our citizens.

Although significant progress has been made in the struggle to overcome cardiovascular disease, the major killer of Americans, we must not become complacent. As we enter a new decade, it is fitting that we strengthen and renew our commitment to winning this battle.

In recognition of the need for all Americans to become involved in the ongoing fight against cardiovascular diseases, the Congress, by Joint Resolution approved December 30, 1963 (77 Stat. 843; 36 U.S.C. 169b), has requested that the President issue an annual proclamation designating February as "American Heart Month."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE BUSH, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the month of February 1990 as American Heart Month. I invite the Governors of the States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, officials of other areas subject to the jurisdiction of the United States, and the American people to join me in reaffirming our commitment to combating cardiovascular diseases and stroke.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 13th day of February, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and fourteenth.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "George H. W. Bush".