

## The American Presidency Project

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### RONALD REAGAN

*XL President of the United States: 1981-1989*

#### Proclamation 5874—Child Health Day, 1988

*September 29, 1988*

*By the President of the United States of America*

#### A Proclamation

For parents, nothing in life can be as important as knowing that the children God gives them are healthy and free to live and grow up safe from harm. For 6 decades, the American people have set aside Child Health Day each year to remind ourselves and the world that, as individuals and a Nation, we seek to ensure the good health of each and every American child. Our national observance of this day will fulfill that mission so long as we keep in mind our duty to safeguard our children's physical well-being; to shelter their God-given innocence; and to shield the unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness that are theirs as Americans and as human beings.

These duties are best met in the family, society's fundamental unit. But responsibility for the health and safety of youngsters often requires the assistance of the wider community, including, for example, the members of private groups, voluntary organizations, and religious orders who care for children; and government officials at the local, State, and Federal levels as well. Since the early part of this century, the Federal government has worked in partnership with all of these entities to protect the health and safety of children.

America has stopped many illnesses that once claimed children's lives. We have helped provide basic health care services to poor and underserved children. We have established systems of services for children with special health care needs, such as chronic illnesses, birth defects, and related conditions, so that these young people can remain in their families and take part in community life. We have also focused increased attention on reductions in premature and low-weight births, on nutrition and nutrition education, and on prevention of playground and street accidents.

Child Health Day, 1988, is a time for reflection on what we have achieved—and for rededication to tasks not yet accomplished. We must continue to battle conditions such as family breakup, poverty, and moral confusion that can cause health problems in children. We must also fight infant mortality, drinking and driving, and problems that can affect children both born and unborn, such as the HIV, poor eating habits, smoking, illegal drug use and alcohol abuse.

We must also reduce the incidence of teenage pregnancy—as well as the spread of venereal diseases and the HIV—by giving young boys and girls good example and solid teaching about affirming life and avoiding sexual relations outside of marriage. And teenagers who do become pregnant need our help as individuals, families, and communities, to see them through their difficulties, not to condemn them or abandon them to the dead end of abortion. We must also do a much better job of encouraging adoption as a compassionate alternative to abortion.

Advances in technology continue to help us save the lives of many fragile infants and to rescue babies whose premature birth would once have meant certain death. We are also more and more able to treat children in the womb for a variety of illnesses and conditions. These developments demonstrate a stark contradiction in one aspect of our national child health policies—the social environment that fosters often heroic efforts to save little ones whose parents want them, but denies legal protection to the unborn whose parents do not want them. We must restore the right to life and our respect for the dignity and worth of every individual.

Our success in caring for all of our children will continue to determine our faithfulness to our heritage and our fate as a Nation. In our every endeavor, let us pray as did the parent portrayed by the poet, "From cut and from tumble, from sickness and weeping, May God have my jewel this day in His keeping."

Now, Therefore, I, Ronald Reagan, President of the United States of America, pursuant to a joint resolution approved on May 18, 1928, as amended (36 U.S.C. 143), do hereby proclaim Monday, October 3, 1988, as Child Health Day.

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-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirteenth.

RONALD REAGAN

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