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APRIL 2, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH WEEK, 1976

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

There is a serious and growing disparity between the health of the 56 million Americans who live in rural America and that of the general population. Physician and dentist shortages are more acute in rural America, emergency medical services are less available, occupational injury and accident rates are far higher and comprehensive health and public health services are less available.

For far too long rural health problems have been ignored. Rural health care was lost sight of in the general breakdown of all rural services resulting from the great migration of our population from farm to city during the first half of this century. In the last decade this migration came to a halt and to some extent was reversed. From 1970-1973, the growth rate for rural areas actually exceeded the growth rate for metropolitan areas, thus compounding the problem.

The Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare has designated 1,400 counties and regions as critical health manpower shortage areas where there are too few doctors, dentists, nurses and other health professionals to properly serve the population. Most of these are in rural areas.

Let me affirm, in our Nation's Bicentennial year -- which celebrates to such a great extent the positive values of our rural heritage -- that we shall make a major commitment to the improvement of health care in our rural communities.

I call upon all our people, rural and urban alike, to support the goal of improving the quality of rural life through better health.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GERALD R. FORD, President of the United States of America, to draw attention to these facts and to encourage solutions to the health problems of rural America, do hereby designate the week beginning April 4, 1976, as National Rural Health Week.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this second day of April, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and seventy-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundredth.

GERALD R. FORD

THE WHITE HOUSE,
April 2, 1976

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