

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

AMERICAN HEART MONTH, 1977

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

For over three decades, diseases of the heart and blood vessels have constituted one of our Nation's most serious health problems. Cardiovascular diseases affect more than 29 million Americans, especially among the elderly, and are the direct cause of more than half of all deaths occurring each year in the United States. While their economic toll in terms of lost wages, productivity, and cost of medical care can be estimated at nearly \$44 billion annually, the toll in terms of human suffering can never be measured.

America's continuing determination to meet any challenge to the well-being of its people is illustrated by the dedication that has characterized its efforts to control these disorders. Sustained research and clinical advances since 1950 have contributed substantially to declining mortality rates for stroke, rheumatic fever, coronary and congenital heart disease, and hypertension. Our investment in research, public and professional education, and community service activities has been rewarded. In that same time, the mortality rate in the United States from all heart and blood vessel diseases has declined by 30 percent. In 1975, deaths in this country from major cardiovascular diseases dropped below one million for the first time since 1967.

This multi-faceted assault on heart and blood vessel diseases has been led by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, a federal agency, and by the American Heart Association, a private health organization funded through contributions from citizens across the country. Their successful efforts illustrate what can be achieved when public and private institutions -- and the American people as well -- join forces against a common threat.

In recognition of the necessity for constant vigilance against the ravages of cardiovascular disease, and to encourage still greater efforts to combat its threat to the Nation's health, the Congress, by joint resolution approved December 30, 1963 (77 Stat. 843; 36 U.S.C. 169b) has requested the President to issue annually a proclamation designating February as American Heart Month.

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NOW, THEREFORE, I, GERALD R. FORD, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the month of February, 1977, as American Heart Month. I invite the Governors of the States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the officials of other areas subject to the jurisdiction of the United States, and the American people, to join with me in reaffirming our commitment to resolving the nationwide problem of cardiovascular disease.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this nineteenth day of January, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred seventy-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and first.

GERALD R. FORD

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