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National Spina Bifida Month, 1986

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Spina bifida strikes one to two of every one thousand babies born in the United States. It is the most commoncrippler of newborns. When this disease occurs, the baby's spinal cord forms abnormally and the arches of the vertebrae, the bones that surround the cord, fail to develop. The spinal cord or its protective tissue may be displaced outside the spinal canal. Nerves supplying the legs, bladder, and bowel are incompletely developed or damaged.

The nerve damage resulting from this disease can have devastating consequences, including muscle paralysis, loss of sensation in the skin, and spine and limb deformities. Most babies with spina bifida also develop hydrocephalus—a potentially dangerous buildup of fluid pressure within the brain.

But thanks to important advances in neurosurgery and antibiotic therapy, a baby born with spina bifida today has between an 80 and 95 percent chance for survival. And the development of new surgical and bracing procedures and devices to compensate for lost function have made it possible for patients to lead more active and normal lives.

Research now under way in the Nation's scientific laboratories is aimed at improving our understanding the cause of this disease and developing methods to prevent it. Much of this work is being done by scientists supported by the Federal government's National Institute of Neurological and Communicative Disorders and Stroke and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. Voluntary agencies like the Spina Bifida Association of America, the National Easter Seal Society, and the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation also promote vital research and provide essential services and encouragement to families. In the work of these agencies, and that of the researchers and clinicians they sponsor, lies the hope that we will one day conquer spina bifida.

To enhance public awareness of the problem of spina bifida, the Congress, by Senate Joint Resolution 368, has designated the month of October 1986 as "National Spina Bifida Month" and authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this event.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the month of October 1986 as National Spina Bifida Month, and I call upon the people of the United States to observe this month with appropriate observances and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 8th day of Oct., in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and eleventh.

Ronald Reagan