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American Heart Month, 1986

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Cardiovascular diseases, which include heart disease, stroke, and other vascular disorders, account for almost as many deaths in this Nation as all other causes combined. In fact, almost one out of every two deaths can be attributed to cardiovascular disease. As recently as 1983, heart and blood vessel diseases killed nearly one million Americans—more people than cancer, accidents, pneumonia, and influenza combined. Even more tragic is the fact that one-fifth of all people killed by cardiovascular diseases are younger than 65.

Heart and blood vessel diseases are not only deadly—they are pervasive. More than one-fourth of the current U.S. population, or more than 63 million of our citizens, suffer from some form of these diseases. Their toll in human suffering can never be calculated.

The economic loss to the Nation is also high. Some \$78.6 billion will be spent in 1986 for physician and nursing services, hospital and nursing home care, medications, and in lost productivity due to disability related to these maladies.

But progress is being made. The American Heart Association, a not-for-profit volunteer health agency, and the Federal government, through the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, have combined forces since 1948 to find better ways both to treat and prevent cardiovascular diseases and to educate the medical community about the most effective techniques.

Because of important advances made by medical science in recent years, premature death and disability have declined. From 1973 to 1983 the death rate from cardiovascular diseases dropped 29 percent.

Doctors are seeking to reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, and atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries) in their patients by encouraging them to lower their blood pressure, stop smoking, and reduce the amount of cholesterol and saturated fats in their diets. The American Heart Association has contributed to this effort by its continued support of research and its commitment to educating Americans about the need to adopt healthful habits of living.

The Federal government, meanwhile, continues to support a large array of cardiovascular research projects. It also encourages all Americans to take responsibility for their own well-being by maintaining good health habits.

Recognizing that Americans everywhere have a role to play in this continuing battle against a major killer, 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.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the month of February 1986 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 me in reaffirming our commitment to the resolution of the nationwide problem of cardiovascular diseases.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-ninth day of January, 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 tenth.

Ronald Reagan