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Crime Victims Week, 1982

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The innocent victims of crime have frequently been overlooked by our criminal justice system. Too often their pleas for justice have gone unheeded and their wounds—personal, emotional and financial—have gone unattended.

The rule of law is fundamental to the preservation of the democratic principles and ideals that law-abiding Americans cherish. Our commitment to criminal justice goes far deeper than our desire to punish the guilty or to deter those considering a lawless course. We must never forget that our laws represent the collective moral voice of a free society—a voice that articulates our shared beliefs about the rules of civilized behavior, and reflects our basic precept that men and women should be treated as free individuals, responsible for the consequences of their actions. When we countenance the suffering of innocent victims of crime, we thus threaten to undermine the faith of our citizens in a legal system that lies at the heart of much that is unique and precious about our Nation itself.

We cannot afford for law-abiding Americans to lose that faith. At a time when crime remains a serious national problem, we must be ever-more zealous in our pursuit of law and justice. In that pursuit, we must never forget that the victims of crimes are not merely statistics on a police blotter; they are our friends, relatives, neighbors and fellow citizens. They are entitled to better treatment, and it is time to do something about it.

The plight of innocent citizens victimized by lawlessness deserves immediate national attention. I have, therefore, decided to establish a Presidential Task Force on Victims of Crime, to be composed of members of the public with particular knowledge and expertise in the area of victims' rights, that will evaluate current national, state and local policies and programs concerning this important issue and recommend executive and legislative action to improve our efforts to assist and protect victims of crime.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the week beginning April 19, 1982, as Crime Victims Week. I urge all Federal, state and local officials involved in the criminal justice system to devote special attention to the needs of victims of crime, and to redouble their efforts to make our system responsive to those needs. I urge all other elected and appointed officials to join in this effort to make our justice system more helpful to those for whom it was designed to protect. And I urge all citizens, from all walks of life, to remember that the personal tragedy of the victim is their own tragedy as well.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 14th day of April, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-two, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and sixth.

Ronald Reagan