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National Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Awareness Week, 1986

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Recent advances in medicine continue to bring out ever more clearly and dramatically the unity and continuity of pre- and postnatal life. Just as we know that the pre-born infant in the womb can now undergo therapies that can contribute to health after birth, we also know that certain types of behavior by the expectant mother can do grave harm to her unborn child, harm that often shows up in the form of serious birth defects.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is one of the three major known causes of birth defects that may result in mental retardation. Of the three, FAS is the only one that, at present, is totally preventable.

FAS is characterized by such serious health problems as prenatal and postnatal growth retardation, developmental and learning disabilities, mental retardation, and other physiological abnormalities such as heart, kidney, and skeletal defects.

This knowledge led the Surgeon General of the United States to issue an advisory in 1981, which strongly encourages women who are pregnant or considering pregnancy to avoid the use of alcohol because of the potentially serious adverse consequences. The Surgeon General's advisory also stresses the preventability of these consequences.

The Congress, by Senate Joint Resolution 189, has designated the week beginning January 12, 1986, as "National Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Awareness Week" and authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this week.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the week of January 12 to 18, 1986, as National Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Awareness Week. I applaud the efforts of the medical/scientific community, the many public and private agencies, organizations, institutions, and concerned citizens who, over the years, have undertaken efforts to prevent FAS and other alcohol-related birth defects. I invite the Governors of the several States, the chief officials of local governments, and all Americans to observe this week with appropriate activities, particularly those that seek to protect the health of children through heightened awareness of the potential adverse effects of alcohol use during pregnancy.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this eighth 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